HOW TO DEAL WITH LADS

P. GREEN

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HOW TO DEAL WITH LADS

HOW TO DEAL WITH LADS:

A HANDBOOK OF CHURCH WORK.

BY

REV. PETER GREEN

RECTOR OF SACRED TRINITY, SALFORD

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

THE RIGHT REV. THE BISHOP OF GLOUCESTER

"Jesus was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd."

Boy's Work
Title

LONDON:
EDWARD ARNOLD.
1910.

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INTRODUCTION

It is a pleasure to respond to the invitation I have received to write a few words of introduction to this little work. Having read it through from cover to cover with the greatest interest, I can warmly commend it to those who are interested in the subject of work among lads. Mr. Green has written out of the fulness of a ripe experience; but the perusal of his volume brings back to me pleasant recollections of some of his 'prentice days, when we were working together in Leeds, and he was still feeling his way with such work as he has described so graphically in the pages which follow; and from having had ample opportunities of knowing what he has done to help that particular class of the community about which he writes, I can say with confidence that the methods which he advocates are such as have proved eminently successful in his hands.

Many readers will, I am sure, be grateful to Mr. Green for the careful and exact way in which he has described his methods, and the details of his work, and still more for the brave and outspoken manner in which he has touched on more than one of the grave difficulties and dangers which have to be faced. Whether the methods here described would prove equally successful in the hands of all other workers in the same field may be questioned ; for in this work, as in all others, the personal equation must always count for much, and a plan which succeeds admirably with one man breaks down utterly when tried by another. Every man must find out by personal experience what methods suit him best, and what weapons he can use with the greatest advantage, and Mr. Green would be the last person to claim that his own methods are the only ones, or even the best for everybody. They suit him, and it may well be that they may suit many others. Anyhow, it is well that other workers in the same field should have the benefit of them, for the suggestions of one who has had so much experience, and that in more than one locality, in this department of work, ought not lightly to be disregarded.

No one, I am certain, can read this book without learning a good deal from it; and, whether or no he

agrees with the methods described, every reader will, at least, come to see what is after all the essential thing required, and will learn that, whatever perplexities and difficulties may seem to block the path and render success impossible, they may in the end be triumphantly surmounted, for, where the spirit of true devotion to such work exists, there "love will find out the way."

EDGAR C. S. GLOUCESTER.

The Palace, Gloucester,
September 1910.

HOW TO DEAL WITH LADS

CHAPTER I

THE WORK AND THE WORKER

Importance of work among boys—For the sake of the men—Of the mothers—Of the girls—Of the boys themselves—This book the result of experience—Type of men suited to the work—Athletic ability unnecessary—The three requirements—Love of the work—Perseverance—Willingness to learn.

No apology is needed, I should suppose, for a book on the subject "How to deal with working lads." The importance of the subject is recognised on all sides. It is only necessary to glance at the Confirmation statistics, and to compare the numbers of male and female candidates, to realise that men and boys are, as a general rule, far less effectively dealt with, by the various parochial organisations, than women and girls. And if the confirmation statistics are sufficient to establish this fact, the statistics of

attendance at the Holy Communion, if they could be obtained, would, I fear, be found to point even more forcibly to the same conclusion. If the number of candidates for Confirmation presented every year is wretchedly small, and if the proportion of male to female candidates is terribly unsatisfactory, the comparatively small number of men and boys who go on to be regular and devout communicants is even more to be deplored. If any one doubts this, let him select any well-worked parish he chooses, and for one month compare the number of men and boys between the ages of fourteen and thirty-five with the number of women and girls of the same age, at the eight o'clock Sunday Eucharist. After applying this test for a large number of years in many different parts of England, I have been tempted to ask if it would be any exaggeration to say that eighty per cent. of male Confirmation candidates lapsed during the first year. And of those who don't absolutely lapse how many become merely formal and occasional, say Easter, Communicants? And yet, surely, without wishing to impose religious tests, there can be no better criterion of a lad's religious life, if he is a member of the Church of England, than his attendance at the Holy Eucharist. I do not mean, of course, that because a young man or a lad is a regular communicant he must therefore be in a satisfactory state spiritually, but I do mean to say that a boy who, after being carefully instructed and prepared

for Confirmation, habitually neglects his communions, must be in an unsatisfactory state spiritually.

And that the condition of the men and boys of the working classes, especially in big towns, is, from the Churchman's point of view, very unsatisfactory is universally admitted. It is impossible to glance through the list of advertisements for curates in any Church paper without finding, again and again, the words "good with men and boys," "one able to influence lads," or some such expression. And the Vicars who advertise in such a way show their wisdom, for the work with the boys and young men is far the most important, and, if successfully done, far the most fruitful work in the parish. It is not merely for itself that it is important, it is the key of the whole position. We are, for instance, constantly being told that the Church is losing her hold on the working men of the country, and we hear the question "How to influence men" re-echoed on every side. Personally, I think the statement that the Church is losing her hold on the working man is ridiculous. She can't lose what she never had, and I am convinced that the power, not merely of religion as a whole, but of Churchmanship also, among working men is greater to-day than it has ever been. But whether comparatively greater or smaller it is of course positively very small, and the question, "How can the Church influence working men?" is of corresponding importance. And the answer to that question is,

I am convinced, "Begin with the boy." The boy is father of the man; and the best, easiest, and most effective way of making truly religious men is to make religious boys. Mark the wax deeply while it is still soft, and open to every impression. Men, of course, may be awakened to religion in middle age, many men are, but the chances are all against it. It is never easy to change the habits of a lifetime, and among the working classes habit, custom, tradition, call it what you will, is all-powerful. And the tradition is all against active habits of religion. There is much latent religion; more I think than many of the clergy quite recognise, and special crises, such as death, sickness, or trouble, call it out, and there is, almost at all times, a tacit recognition of God and of His over-ruling providence; but active religion is too often wanting. Prayer, public worship, and the use of sacraments, are neglected. And if these are to be restored—and unless they are restored I fear the latent religion itself will not survive very much longer—the best way, I am convinced, is to begin with the boys.

Nor is it only for the sake of the men that the boys are to be valued. The way to the mother is through her boys. She may have very little sense of spiritual things or of her own need of help from God, but most women have an earnest desire for the good of their children. The woman who, when I handed her back her first baby boy whom I had just christened, burst

out with, "Oh, sir, if he should grow up bad!" was, I suspect, only expressing what most mothers feel. And this feeling is specially strong with respect to the boys, because it is just there where they are most conscious of failure. Nothing is more curious than the lack of parental control over their children, and especially over the boys, by most mothers of the working classes. Even among North Country people I have known very few mothers who could exercise any effective control over their lads when once they had reached an age to go to work; and in London, and the south generally, this lack of authority is notorious. That a parent should be expected to control her children is often forgotten. Yet the desire to see them grow up good is as strong as in any class. I wonder how many mothers, during the past ten years, have asked me to speak to "our George" or "our Willie," "because he is growing up rough and rude, and I would like some one to do something for him." And the man who can do something for the lads will not find it very hard to move the mother also, nor to persuade her that what has had power to influence her boys for good, may be of value for herself as well.

And with the girls too. Girls are easy enough to get hold of, and easy enough to lead in right paths, while they are young, but how often the engagement or marriage is a turning point at which the wrong road is taken. How often the best girl of the young

woman's guild becomes the careless and irreligious wife. It is of course not always so, far from it. And when it is so, it is hard to blame. What with household cares, young children, and the example of neighbours, it must be hard indeed to stick to one's religion if "the master" is indifferent or perhaps hostile to religion. A believing husband would make all the difference. If any one doubts this, let him ask the next hospital chaplain he meets how often he gets some such answer as this: "I used to be a communicant before I married, but since then, what with the children, and what with my husband not caring, I seem to have let it all go." Every G.F.S. worker and Guild lady knows the importance of her girls marrying religious men. With them, and with the lads as well, the time when they begin walking out is the critical time.

But indeed it is not only for themselves, nor for their indirect influence, that the boys of a parish deserve attention. The direct influence of a really religious boy—and, in spite of much that is said to the contrary by those who know nothing about it, the boy is naturally a most religious creature—is often immense. In ninety-nine cases out of one hundred, a boy who really has the root of the matter in him, will want to do something for others. I have known boys who worked till the small hours of Sunday morning in shops or in the market, who would be up and out by seven on Sunday to call their

club mates for the monthly communion. I knew a boy who, when my fellow curate got hold of him, did not know who St. Paul was, but "thought he was a man in the Bible, as there is a church near the station where they worship him," who a year after was bringing his mother (t'owd girl) to church with him and teaching his younger brother (our Abr'am) to say his prayers. But why multiply instances? Every clergyman can tell of cases where a boy, even a young one, has been the one religious influence in a household, and where it has been abundantly proved that "a little child shall lead them."

So for every reason, for the importance of the work, and for the need for it, a book on the subject of work among working lads should need no apology. Whether I am the person to write it is a different question, and one that the book itself alone can answer. I will only say here that the methods I recommend are those which I myself have used and found valuable, and that I write from experience, and experience only. And because I may at times appear dogmatic, and perhaps egotistical, I want to say here at the very opening that I make no claim to any authority beyond what a genuine love for my subject may be supposed to give. I quite realise that where there are many men there must be many methods, and that things which I have failed to make use of might yield valuable results in other hands, while ways of work which I value might not suit other

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workers. But I lack both time and patience—and I expect my readers would soon lack them also—to qualify each statement with the remark that what I say may be quite wrong, and that though this or that seems so to me, it may, in reality, be quite different. So I shall just say my say, asking my readers, once for all, to remember that I make no claim to infallibility. I give the results of my labours and failures and successes for what they are worth, quite recognising that another man might neglect all I recommend and do all I caution him against, and yet obtain better results than I have ever known.

The first question that presents itself is the question, "What sort of man should take up work among lads?" What special qualifications are required for success in the work? What are the characteristics which constitute that mysterious creature so often advertised for, "a man good with lads"? For my own part I believe the requirements for this work are precisely the same as for any other work whatever, and are simply a love for the work, a determination to succeed, and a willingness to learn. There is a very general impression that, to succeed with boys and men, a man must be a great, or, at any rate, a fair athlete. I remember reading, years ago, in a little pamphlet on what was called the *Public School Christian Camp*, the following nauseous sentence: "What will boys think when an old soldier tells them

of the battle for truth or a University Blue speaks to them of Christ?" If I thought, which I do not, that boys could only be induced to listen to religion when sweetened by the jam of athletics I should think religion was no longer worth preaching either to boys or to any other creature. But entirely apart from such unwholesome rubbish as this, there is a very general impression about that athletic ability is almost a necessity if a man is to do good work among men. My own experience does not in the least support this view; I believe it to be quite unimportant whether a man is good at games or not. It is quite true that two of the finest workers in this class of work that I have ever known were in the front rank among athletes, but it is equally true that many fine athletes I have known have failed very conspicuously as club workers, while the finest worker of the kind I have ever known, a man whose influence over his lads was perfectly astounding and lasts still, ten years after he left the parish where I knew him, was the least athletic man I ever knew, short-sighted, lame, and very peculiar. On the whole, after carefully considering all the workers; among boys whom I can remember, I am inclined to say that it is a matter of absolutely no importance whether a man is athletic or not. Undoubtedly it is a good thing for a man to associate as much as possible with his lads and young men in their sports. If he is athletic he will have to take care that he does not make what should be for

their amusement an excuse for his own enjoyment, to the neglect, and possibly even the exclusion, of those for whom the games were intended. It is not pleasant to hear a lad complain that when Mr. Blank is in the club you can't get a game on the billiard table; or that perhaps now Mr. Dash is on his holidays he will get a chance to play centre forward. Nor are small boys whom a man has shown off before on Saturday afternoon necessarily in a more receptive frame of mind at the Bible class on Sunday. As for the idea that a man can compel a boy's respect and admiration by mere skill at games, the notion to any one whose ideas of boys are drawn from nature and not from books for boys written by women, is simply ridiculous. Most boys can appreciate the difference between a good man and a good athlete, and the average working boy knows enough of professional pugilists, pedestrians, and other professional athletes to recognise that a man who is a great athlete may be, at the same time, a great fool or a great blackguard.

On the other hand, if a man is not athletic, he must be careful not to make that the excuse for remaining in ignorance of half of a boy's life and character, nor for neglecting one of the most powerful means of getting into touch with boys who, in other ways, may be very shy and unapproachable.

But when all is said and done, athletics constitute only one way of getting to know one's boys, and there

are plenty of other ways, any one of which can be used or abused.

But, while athletic ability is not absolutely needed, a genuine love for the work is. If a man is not interested in his boys he will do little or no good. Many men will tell you that they are not naturally good with boys and don't get on with them. I would ask such men to consider whether the real reason is not that they are not really interested in the lads, that in fact the work bores them and is done in a half-hearted way. It will perhaps be objected that I have not mended matters by this suggestion. Whether we say that a man is naturally good with boys or naturally interested in boys it is equally a thing which lies beyond a man's own control. But that, I am convinced, is not so. Any man who takes up any work really in earnest and with the determination to succeed will become interested in it before long. And this is pre-eminently true when human beings form the subject of the work, for all human beings are interesting and loveable just in proportion as one knows them. That truth lies at the bottom of what at first seems the not very conclusive argument of St. John, "If a man love not his brother whom he has seen, how shall he love God whom he has not seen?" Yes! you only need to see your brother as he really is, to love him, and if any man will take up work among boys and young men with the determination to succeed, he will not be long

before he finds the fascination of it. Let me give an example. I knew a man, an old public school and Oxford man, who was persuaded to go down and help at a camp for working boys. He went, much against his will, and, to quote his own words, "when at the station I saw two hundred London boys waiting for the train I just sneaked into a first-class compartment and wished myself dead." But, being a good fellow, he threw himself into the life of the camp and tried to make friends with the lads, boys whose speech, habits, and ways of thought were almost as strange to him as if he and they had belonged to different countries. And because he tried to throw himself into the life of the camp, the fascination of the work had gripped him by the end of the week, and he was a boys' club worker from that day. And so it was at the St. John's College Mission during the vacations. Many were shy and strange and found the evenings in the lads' club, and even those in the men's club, rather trying at first. Yet if they threw themselves into the work from a sense of duty they were pretty certain to continue it for its own sake. There are not a few men to-day with their own work among lads who first awoke to the fact that the working boy is a human being—and a most interesting and loveable human being—in the boys' club at the College Mission. But if a man puts his hand to the plough, sticks to it, and will not be beaten, he will find it not merely most interesting and useful work,

but also most valuable discipline. If a man is conceited, overbearing, or silly, other people will just let him go his way, and, working only among grown-up people, such a man may never learn his faults or guess that he is a failure; or, if he should realise his failure, will attribute it to every cause but the right one, namely, himself. But with boys it is not so. For absolute and brutal sincerity when a disagreeable truth has to be spoken, the boy, in any class of life, has not his equal. If he thinks you a fool he will leave you in no doubt of the fact. And that is a great comfort. How often, as one looks at the pews of regular churchgoers or at the serried ranks of the men's service or the mothers' meeting, one wishes one could really get at one's people and induce them to say what opinion they have really formed of one. The boys, if you really mix with them, will let you see yourself as others see you. It may not be, it often certainly is not, pleasant, but it is always wholesome. And for this very reason too, bad, unsound work among boys is almost impossible. A man may work hard and well among boys and see no results, but if he gets any results the chances are that the work is good as far as it goes. With grown-up people, as we all know, the outward shell of work will survive long after the inward spirit is departed, but with boys the failure will begin to show at once, long before the time has come to cry Ichabod. What I mean is, that work among boys may be good or

bad, successful or unsuccessful, but it will show pretty well what it is. Showy, shoddy, insincere work is almost an impossibility.

But if a man is to do any good in this as in any other work, he must be content to learn, to use the genius which consists of an infinite capacity for taking pains. It is perfectly easy to see, by the way a man handles a horse, whether he is used to horses, and every one must have noticed how a man who, as we say, has been brought up among horses, will soothe a restive or nervous horse and set him at ease in a moment by a word or by his method of handling. So too with all animals and birds. But human beings are, after all, animals too, and they need quite as long and careful study, and fall into quite as many different classes. I would appeal to the worker among any class of human beings, among soldiers, sailors, schoolgirls, miners, public school boys, factory girls, rough lads, prisoners, penitents, or what you will. I will appeal, I say, to workers in any special class, and ask them, "Do you not dread the visit of the distinguished stranger who "says a few words'?" Of course he may turn out to have had some experience with the special class in question, and be able to talk as one who knows and understands his audience. Or, again, he may have the sense to know that he does not know, and to talk merely as a man to men. But the chances are that he will say, not what he thinks or feels, but what he

fancies he ought to think and feel; and then every word he says will be an infliction hard to be borne. Kipling, with his wonderful insight into human nature, writes in more than one of his stories,—notably in *Stalky and Co.*, in the story of the Member of Parliament and the Flag,—of how a man, speaking to a class he does not know or understand, makes every well-meant word an insult and an offence. And it is a great mistake to suppose that, because all men were once boys, therefore any man will be certain to understand any boy. Not every man who has been at a public school can hit it off with the public school boy: how much less with the office boy, the factory lad, the fisher lad, the pit boy, or one of any of the other classes. No; a man must be content to learn by experience, to make his mistakes, and to earn the title of an expert among boys as he would the title of expert in any other subject, by hard work and constant practice. One man may be more naturally gifted for the work than another, may have more patience, more sympathy, a pleasanter manner, a clearer remembrance of what he was when a boy, but practice makes the master, and the expert, unlike the poet, is made, not born. And even so I am not sure that the title "expert among boys" is not too ambitious. Oliver Wendell Holmes tells of a man who disclaimed the title of entymologist and even of coleopterist. To know all beetles was too great a claim. Hardly would

he call himself a scarabæist. And are boys less complex than beetles? One class is the study of a lifetime. For my own part I would only pretend to write of the working boy in large towns.

CHAPTER II

THE CLUB

The club—Method of working—To know the boys—The subscription—Hours of opening and closing—Times and conditions of opening—Age of membership—Clergyman's work in his club.

To pass from the question of the workers to that of the work itself. The question is often asked by a young man just starting in his first curacy: "How shall I begin work with the lads?" The first step is, I think, undoubtedly, to get to know your boys. As a general rule boys distrust strangers; when, however, they once really know and trust a man, their confidence is not readily lost. The first thing to be aimed at, then, is to get to know them, and to give them a chance to know you. And for this a Boys' Club is almost a necessity. One often hears it said that the cost of rent or the impossibility of finding suitable premises makes a club out of the question. I suppose there are such cases; and when a club is really impossible the parson must look for some other means of getting into touch with his boys, though he will find himself terribly handicapped.

I cannot help thinking, however, that many people suppose a club to be a much bigger and more expensive undertaking than it is. Of course, if a man has plenty of money and makes a hobby of it, it is very nice to supply the lads of a parish with a club replete, as the auctioneers say, with every modern convenience. But there is no necessary connection between the cost of a club and the value of the work done in it. I remember how at the annual meeting of a vast and expensive undenominational club one of the speakers spoke scornfully of the wretched little parochial clubs with a box of dominoes and half a bagatelle board. I have known parochial clubs with half a box of dominoes and no bagatelle board at all, which did good and lasting work. All that is really necessary is a room which can be kept dry, warm, and light, a few old illustrated papers, bound volumes of the *Graphic*, *Illustrated London News*, etc., and a few games. Of course, where more can be got it is all the better. Boxing, where there is room, is an unfailing source of pleasure. Gymnastics, if an instructor can be got, will attract a good class of boy, though only a small proportion will stick to steady work. A bagatelle table or small billiard table is a great resource, ping-pong will prove a permanent attraction, and draughts and dominoes are, of course, always popular. Cards, I am convinced, should not be allowed. Many excellent men differ

with me, I know, but I am quite unconvinced by their arguments. It may be illogical to allow billiards and exclude cards, but life is not always amenable to logic, and I am sure cards are a needless source of temptation. But whatever you have or don't have, I would always begin in a small way. Nothing is a greater mistake than to open a fine, well-furnished club straight off. One of two things is sure to happen. Either the club is swamped with just the class of boy you don't want, the respectable young clerk from the suburbs who will not mix with the genuine working boy and with whom the corduroy and choker boy will not associate, or else the club is rushed by a swarm of rough lads whom you don't know and over whom it is impossible to exercise any control. Much better begin in a small way. The upper classes of the Sunday School, together with the communicants' list, will yield a small nucleus of boys, and these will suggest plenty more who have recently drifted from Church and Sunday School and who will gladly return if any one shows an interest in them. Parochial visiting will yield plenty if you make a point of inquiring after boys of a suitable age during the afternoon visit, and paying a special call in the evening at a time when you can catch the boy in and invite him to visit the Club. Only let the membership be by invitation, at any rate at first. Anything like a constitution, anything like self-government, should be introduced very carefully

and only after some considerable time. After some years, when there is a tradition and a tone, and when you have at your back an old guard of good church lads whom you can trust, it may do to introduce something of the nature of a limited monarchy; but at first a benevolent despotism, a tyranny tempered by chaff, is the safest form of government, and, I believe, really the most popular. Let two things be known and understood: first, that every boy can get a fair and patient hearing; and, secondly, that your word is law.

In connection with the constitution the subject of subscription comes up. The subscription may be as small as you like—a penny a week is a very general amount—but a subscription there certainly should be. What costs nothing is often but little valued; and also, I am sorry to say, most working boys suffer from the curse of Reuben, and find it very difficult to stick steadily to anything, and they are far more ready to throw up what costs them nothing than to leave a club to which they have been paying for some time. Moreover, the paying of the weekly penny and the stamping of the membership card forms a valuable opportunity of seeing and speaking to each member at least once a week. Supposing the club year to run from September to September, a very convenient time, I use a card such as the following:—

St. George's Lads' Club. Sept. to Sept. .						Name..... Address.....					
	1st.	2nd.	3rd.	4th.	5th.		1st.	2nd.	3rd.	4th.	5th.
Sept. .						Mar. .					
Oct. .						April .					
Nov. .						May .					
Dec. .						June .					
Jan. .						July .					
Feb. .						Aug. .					

The next illustration shows the same card filled up for a boy who joins, say, in the third week in October 1904:—

St. George's Lads' Club. Sept. 1904 to Sept. 1905.						Name: Tom Smith. Address: 20 Cross Street.					
	1st.	2nd.	3rd.	4th.	5th.		1st.	2nd.	3rd.	4th.	5th.
Sept. .	×	×	×	×	×	Mar. .					
Oct. .	×	×			×	April .					×
Nov. .					×	May .					×
Dec. .						June .					
Jan. .					×	July .					×
Feb. .					×	Aug. .					

The card shows when he joined, and what months have only four Saturdays, and as he pays each week's

penny he gets a star stamped on the corresponding square in the card and on the treasurer's book. Should a boy be out of work, he can, if he likes, get his star given him provided his card was paid up at the time he fell out of work, and provided he claims at the time. No boy is allowed to use the club who is more than four weeks behindhand with his subscriptions, nor can any boy attend the Christmas supper or the midsummer trip unless his card is clear. The possession of such a card is not useful merely as a mark of membership, but it acts also as a valuable check on the boy who will attend the club regularly for a while, then suddenly, and without any reason, absent himself from club, class, and Church, for six months and then suddenly turn up, probably just before the club supper or annual trip, and expect all the privileges of regular membership. To re-admit such a boy without question is bad for discipline, and causes great dissatisfaction among the other members; to exclude him altogether may be the means of losing not only the boy himself but his whole family and possibly his mates. To insist that, as he neither resigned his membership nor claimed the privileges of absence, sickness, nor loss of work, he should pay up the two or three shillings club arrears is a wholesome discipline recognised as fair by all concerned.

I need scarcely say that a boys' club can never hope to be self-supporting even under the most favourable circumstances. If the subscriptions are

enough to make good the fair wear and tear of games and apparatus, and to pay part of the cost of gas and firing, it is very good management. The rest of the cost must be made good by outside subscriptions, and many men who won't subscribe to the clergy sustentation fund or S.P.G. will give willingly and generously to club work. And I have known more than one case where men, first interested in a Church club, have come to be interested in the Church itself when they saw among the lads the power of Christ visibly set forth. And at any rate I have never known any difficulty in arousing interest in the work of the club or in getting the necessary funds. And for this reason, while the payment of subscriptions should be strictly enforced—for among working lads, as among all classes, there are some who will shirk anything they can — exceptions may be freely made when necessary. What I mean is this: if there is no good reason why a boy should not pay, let him pay or leave the club; but at the same time let it be clearly known that any reasonable excuse given at the time will be accepted. And I would also, at this point, remark that I am, on the whole, against the making any charge for games, as, for instance, for the use of the billiard table. For one thing, it makes gambling easy and its detection difficult, and, secondly, it is a heavy tax on boys who have perhaps only sixpence a week—or less—pocket money, or perhaps a shilling, and have to buy their own clothes. And if a boy is

constantly asking for pennies for the club it soon causes unpleasantness at home. And, lastly, it puts an unpleasant bar between the richer and poorer members. If an alternative source of revenue is needed, it is a good thing to sell cakes, biscuits, chocolate, and aerated drinks in the club. I have always made it a rule that eatables—fried fish, cheap fruit, and abominable ices—are not to be brought into the club, and the rule is much more easily enforced if good and cheap things are on sale. The profit on aerated waters is 4d. in the shilling, and on biscuits and sweets hardly less. There is generally some quiet, steady lad without much taste for games ready to take charge, and the revenue is a steady and assured one.

Next to the question of subscription comes that of hours and times of opening. The hour at which the club opens will of course depend on many things, such as the average time at which the boys get off work, and the hour of evening service, if the curate has no one to leave in charge of the club during his absence. Two things, however, may be noted: firstly, that the club can well open at a later hour in the summer, when the evenings are light and fit for out-door games, than in the winter; and secondly, that if the boys are at all rough and there is any difficulty in keeping order, this difficulty will be less if the club is open early, say at 7 p.m., so that the boys drift in, in twos and threes, and settle down to games, than it

will be if the club opens so late that a crowd has collected at the doors. The boys are then excited by horse play in the street, they pour into the room in a disorderly crowd, and there are sure to be disputes as to who plays first on the billiard table or takes first turn with the gloves. As to the question of the closing time, I recommend 10 p.m. Later than that is certainly not good for boys, and an earlier hour will give dissatisfaction to many and perhaps defeat the very object of the club by inducing boys to come in from 7 to just before 9 p.m. and then go off to the second performance of some of the less reputable music halls which run two performances each night. It is a good plan, however, to ascertain when visiting whether any parents wish their boys home early, and to keep a list of boys who must leave the club at 9 p.m. or 9.30, as the case may be. Such an arrangement not only shows a regard for the wishes of the parents and disarms any prejudice on their part against the club—and such prejudice does sometimes, though very rarely, show itself—but the mere asking of the question often suggests to the parents' minds that they are, after all, responsible for the children God has given them.

The question, how many nights a week the Club should be open, is an all-important one. Personally, I have no doubt that the ideal is for it to be open every night. For what is a working lad to do with himself of an evening when he has washed and had

tea? One in a hundred perhaps will stay in and read; but every one who knows anything of lads knows that it will only be one in a hundred. Night school, thank Heaven, will account for many, but the boys whose parents have not been able to put them to a trade or get them into a good office, the boys, that is to say, who will be labourers and unskilled workers when they grow up, have very little inducement to attend night school to learn things they will have no opportunity of using. But even the most exceptional boy cannot be expected, after working hard all day, to attend night school every night. There remains, then, the streets. But to stand at the corner of a dark, dirty street, within sight and sound of all that goes on in even the best conducted public-house, cannot be considered a profitable way of spending the time. Football, touch, and other rough games make the lads a nuisance to passers-by and a fit object for the attentions of the police. The worst boy in the crowd is sure to set the fashion in the matter of swearing, gambling, and filthy language. Gangs of rough, hoydenish girls, as wild and as little under control as the boys, are an added danger and, at an age when a healthy boy should have no thoughts beyond his work, his games, and his religion, you will find young couples "walking out" together, hanging about dark passages and corners, and ripe for every mischief. And, alas, the dangers of the streets don't end there. There are dangers from evil men, such as

every club worker ought to be aware of and on his guard against. I cannot speak further of that question now, but I shall later on.

So then, for every reason, it is desirable that the club should be open as often as possible. But there is one absolutely necessary qualification: it must only be open on the evenings when there can be some one present to take charge. The boys cannot be left to themselves, at any rate for more than a few minutes. On that point everyone competent to offer an opinion is agreed. It is of no use saying that sensible boys, using the games and apparatus which have been bought largely with their own money, *ought* to be able to be trusted to behave sensibly. It is little or no good—except as a moral object lesson—closing the club for a time, and inflicting other punishments, for disorder. The boys must have some one over them to keep order, and that person must be one capable of keeping order. There is little or none of the *esprit de corps* of public school boys, and even the most well meaning of the elder lads make very poor monitors or prefects. As lieutenants under a capable man they are excellent; as men to take charge on their own they are, with, of course, rare and notable exceptions, incompetent themselves and unpopular with the other members. It is so, I am told, in the army. The ranks yield grand non-commissioned officers; but how often a real leader of men? So then the

club can only be open when some one in authority can be in the club, or within easy call of it, all or almost all the evening. Now, of course, this is work the layman ought to do. And, of course, he often does it splendidly. No man who knows anything of the subject will deny that some of the finest club workers are laymen. But surely also no one will deny that many lay workers in this sphere are a delusion and a snare. The work is one which requires, as I have said, great enthusiasm, long practice, and a determination to succeed. Many laymen, having no compelling necessity for sticking to the work, soon tire. And the man who, after volunteering to take every Tuesday, writes on three Wednesdays out of four to explain that he was kept late at work, or had a slight cold, or that a friend dropped in and kept him, is simply more worry than he is worth. The comfort is he is sure very soon to drop off altogether. So then the club can only be opened on as many nights a week as the curate can either find competent workers for, or himself undertake.

But however many helpers a man may get, he must himself be in the club as much as possible; if possible, some considerable portion of every night when it is open. Never forget that the object of the club is not to teach the boys draughts and billiards, no, nor even chiefly to keep them out of the streets, but to give you an opportunity of getting to know them, and to give them an opportunity of getting to

know you. The man who gives to his boys' club, premises, apparatus, money for current expenses, and, in fact, everything except personal attention, will reap all the vexation and none of the profit of club management. In nothing is it more true than in this work, that the one thing a man can give which is worth giving is himself. And also it must be remembered that unless there is a competent and careful man at the head of things a club itself may become a centre of contamination. Gambling is a continual danger to be watched against. Swearing and filthy conversation are as possible, and form as fruitful a source of evil in an ill-managed club, as in the street. A club merely as a club does no good. It is, as I have said, a means to an end. But what is often forgotten is that unless carefully managed it may be a means to a very bad end.

The last point to be settled at this stage with regard to club management is the age of membership. Fifteen to eighteen are very common limits, with perhaps an extention to twenty as members of the "old guard." At the same time it seems a great pity to keep boys waiting a year or even two years after they leave day school before they can join the club. During that time they will be likely to contract a taste for the streets, and the age when they leave school is the best time at which to get hold of them. I once heard a distinguished officer speaking at a meeting for the C.L.B. refer to "the difficult age at

which boys leave school." That, of course, is pure nonsense. I would undertake to influence as many boys of from thirteen to fifteen as I can find time to speak to. The really difficult age with boys you don't know well is from fifteen and a half to eighteen, the time when they begin to feel their feet as men and start taking girls to the theatre. So that it is really a pity to miss the chance of catching your boys young. On the other hand, if the club is full of little boys under fifteen, the elder boys will complain, and perhaps stop away. If it is possible to have two rooms, a large one for boxing, gymnastics, and rough, noisy games, and, a smaller one for billiards, draughts, and reading, the problem will solve itself, and the boys separate by an automatic classification, especially if the rule of comparative quiet and peace in the smaller room is rigidly enforced. If, however, there is only one room, and that a small one, I confess I know of no satisfactory solution. The two classes will not mix. One course is to have so many days a week for boys over fifteen and so many for boys under that age. This, however, gives double the work and a great deal less than half results, and there is always difficulty with friends of different ages whom the rule would separate, and also with boys notably old or young for their age. For my own part I think in such a case the only thing is to set the club age at from the day a boy goes to work to the time when he wishes to join the

men's club, and leave it to settle itself by natural selection whether the club becomes one for younger or older boys. And then, when the point is settled, try to hold the others, whom the club fails to draw, by some of the other means I shall mention.

So then let us suppose we have started with a couple of rooms and a score or so of lads carefully picked. In one room there will be a bright fire or warm stove with a ring of comfortable chairs or benches round it, a few tables for draughts and dominoes, plenty of back numbers of magazines and illustrated papers, and, if space and funds allow, a bagatelle board or small billiard table. In the other room there may be a few pairs of dumb-bells and indian clubs, a set or two of boxing gloves, any simple gymnastic apparatus which may be possible, and if there is an instructor, a punch ball and Sandow developer. I say "if there is an instructor," because the two last items are much better omitted unless they can be watched, as they are easily misused and readily spoilt. Boys will stand and hit at the punch ball sideways with an indian club, or a dozen will unite to pull at the developer. Boys can't help being senseless and destructive like all young animals, and it is as little use to blame them as to blame a puppy for biting the hearth-rug. It is much better to provide only strong and cheap apparatus or to pay a constant caretaker.

And when the club is thus started what will be the

special work of the clergyman? He should be as much in the club as possible, even if there is a regular paid caretaker. On nights when some kindly layman takes charge the clergyman may well keep away, both to give him a chance to find his feet and get to know the boys, and also because, if the parson is always present, the layman feels that he is, after all, of little use, and that it does not matter whether he is regular or not. When, however, the parson is in charge himself, he ought to find plenty to do to make the time pass quickly. He should be constantly on the move, passing, if there are two or more rooms, from room to room, now putting down on the slate the names of the boys in the order in which they are to play, now settling a dispute among the billiard players or a point of law at draughts, now time-keeping for the boxers, or coaching the gymnast or club swingers. But among all his duties his chief object will be to talk to the boys, or, rather, to let them talk to him. The less he says and the more he listens the better, for there is absolutely no road to a boy's confidence so certain as letting him talk to you, and no way to the knowledge of his character so sure. It is so with all boys in all classes; they love to talk about themselves. Who is prime favourite with the public school boy just home from school? Is it not the younger brother, the sister, or even the old nurse, who will listen to his vainglorious account of his own doings, and hear endless school stories in

which he plays the rôle of hero? And so it is with working lads. They love to talk, and can't find a listener. Mother is too busy, and perhaps too fond of hearing her own voice. No one else cares. So the club manager must be prepared to be the silent and appreciative listener in many a group round the fire, and to listen with sympathy to many an endless and pointless narrative. And when sympathy and a little knowledge supply the key, the stories, for all their rambling lack of point, are often brimful of interest, humour, and pathos. Often, listening to my boys, I feel inclined—silently and to myself, of course—to paraphrase the words of Mistress Barbara Grant, and say, "You must not think because I cannot look at them without laughing that I do not love them very well, for indeed I am all love and laughter every time I look at them."

CHAPTER III

THE ETHICS OF THE CLUB

Rules — Punishments — Attitude of the boys to the club manager — His attitude to them — Character of club workers.

In the previous chapter we considered the material arrangements of the club. I now pass on to the ethical questions which arise in connection with club management. And first, what about rules? I confess I believe in having as few rules as possible. If you attempt to have anything like a complete code of laws the boys will exercise their ingenuity in avoiding them. "Well, sir, there is no rule against it," you will be told. In addition to the self-obvious rules of no swearing and no gambling, I have generally had but two rules: no throwing things about, whether it is club apparatus or merely paper or orange peel, and no interference with the gas or fire. If to these be added the rule, no conduct likely to interfere with the enjoyment of other members, the code of laws will, I fancy, be found both full enough and elastic enough. There is another rule which will readily suggest itself to the minds of

many, namely, no smoking. But to forbid all smoking is a rather arbitrary rule when there are members of eighteen or nineteen years, and to settle an age above which smoking is allowed, and below which it is forbidden, is a difficult thing to enforce. I am, besides, always unwilling to multiply causes of transgression. The line I have generally taken is to say, "If your mother lets you smoke at home you may smoke here, but if you know she does not approve of it, then you must not smoke in the club," and then I put the boys on honour not to do in the club what they know their parents would disapprove. In addition, if a boy's parents, through mere slackness and lack of parental feeling, let a boy smoke when he is too young, I take the matter into my own hands, and just say, "Tom, a little wretched, white-faced, undersized rat like you has no right to smoke, and I won't have it. If you want to stunt your growth and the little sense you have, do it outside. I wont have it here."

Of punishments, we may say, as of rules, the fewer the better. For breaking and spoiling things, unless it is done wilfully, there should be neither fine nor penalty of any sort. Growing boys don't know their own strength, they simply can't play lightly, and a certain amount of what looks almost like wilful destructiveness seems a necessity for them. One thing, however, may well be insisted on, and that is that all breakages and accidents should be at once

reported by the boy himself. It is fine discipline in moral courage for a boy, in a class sadly lacking in the spirit of discipline, to report even a small accident. I have seldom experienced a greater thrill of pleasure than I did the other day when I heard a boy explain to a recently joined member who had smashed an indian club by whacking it against the iron upright of the horizontal bar. "Oh, it's all right, he won't say anything if you go and own up and say how you did it, except perhaps he'll call you a fat-headed young lump." But never allow tale-bearing. Here, too, there is a certain lack of the public school spirit, but it should be the work of the club to inculcate it. I am myself much against general punishments for undiscovered offences, such for instance as closing the whole club because the culprits in some piece of mischief will not give up their names, but even in such cases—and such cases are sometimes unavoidable—I would still insist on the names being given up by the offenders themselves and not by informers. Only be sure to say that the club will be shut for a certain time, say a week or a fortnight, if the names are not given in, and not to say that the club will be closed *till* the names are in, or you may be in the undignified position of having to go back on your word in the event of the names not coming in at all. In cases where the offence is a general one, when, that is to say, the whole club gives way to disorder, as will

sometimes occur, the punishment must, of course, be general too, and the closing of the club for a week is not a bad thing. Only in all things let your punishments be as few, as light, and as soon over as possible, and don't nag the boys. Often when a boy is a little difficult he is made more intractable by some well-meaning worker worrying him and trying to make him own himself in the wrong. Leave him alone and he will be all right. And above all remember that many of the boys have never known punishment, never known discipline except perhaps in school. If they have had what pass for "good parents," they will have been allowed all their lives to do exactly as they like. "I don't believe in making children do what they don't like," is said to me repeatedly. On the other hand, if they have had what are called "bad parents," the boys may have been much knocked about, but as they have been punished or rewarded not for being bad or good, or disobedient or obedient, but for being troublesome or not troublesome, they will have learnt nothing by it. And so the first touch of real discipline is like the first touch of spur or whip to a colt. So I say, be gentle. I don't think punishment ever does much good unless it is inflicted by some one we love. But how fond your boys will get of you, and how much punishment they will readily take when they are fond of you, is astonishing.

Also let the punishment fit the crime. I do not

like to meet such offences as gambling, swearing, lying, stealing, etc., by such secular punishments—if I may use the term—as exclusion from club privileges. A serious talk in which some attempt is made to touch the boy's conscience, is much better. If such offences are repeated it may be necessary to suspend the lad for a time, but make it clear that it is not as a punishment for him but as a protection for the others. Let the sinner and the whole club feel that no man liveth to himself, and that a gambler or a foul-mouthed lad sins against his companions. Some boys it may be necessary to expel altogether. But I shall speak of how to deal with special cases later on. There is, however, one class of boy of which, as he is a common object of every club, I would speak here; I mean the boy who upsets all order and discipline by mere stupidity. Some boys are always of this sort, some merely have fits of it, but when you get a bad specimen of the class, one will upset a whole room. He will neither play a game himself nor let others, and he has the same effect on other boys as a nervous, shying horse has on other horses, he gets on their nerves and upsets them. Now, to lose one's temper with such a boy is fatal, and that for many reasons. For one thing, such boys are generally among the nicest and best boys in the club, boys who, if well handled, will turn out splendidly. Also, they don't mean any harm and yet are perfectly maddening, and so, if you give

way to natural irritation, you are almost certain to be unduly severe, and possibly to put yourself in the wrong by an act of injustice. The best plan is first of all to try and get the boy to settle down. Get him to play you a game, or, better still, to help you in some work such as sorting all the old dominoes and draughts, or putting the game cupboard straight. If this fails, just take the bull by the horns and send him home *saying quite clearly why.* Say, "Albert, you are in one of your silly moods to-night and I can't put up with you any more; you worry me and disturb the other members. No one can enjoy their games because of you. You had better go home and try and be less silly to-morrow. Good-night." Such a sentence of exile, if delivered without heat or temper, may produce some good and can do little harm.

With regard to the boy's attitude to you I would say, be as friendly as possible, but do not allow the slightest rudeness to pass. I once knew a man who let his boys call him Billy to his face. I don't believe boys care a bit more, or indeed as much, for a man in such cases, and I am sure it is wrong in principle. If they are insolent to you it may pass, but if they are encouraged to be insolent in the wider world to others of their social superiors they will suffer for it. If a boy is insolent to me I say quietly, "Ned, you forget yourself. Please remember to whom you are speaking. I don't like such

manners." You will not have to say such a thing twice either to the same boy or to others of the group, and the boy will bear no malice. Indeed, it is quite easy, the next day or even the same evening, to show the lad some little mark of attention or kindness, to which he will readily respond.

And while you are as friendly and familiar as possible with all, be careful not to make favourites of any. It is, of course, quite impossible not to like some boys better than others, but it is quite fatal to show it. It is not too much to say, that a man who has let the boys get the idea that he favours one more than another, has lost all chance of influence. And with all the boys alike, avoid anything like a petting and affectionate manner. Boys can and do become deeply and sincerely attached to their clergy or class teachers, but they are not demonstrative, and do not understand or care for demonstrations of affection. A man in London years ago was recommended to me as "so good with boys." He reduced the club to complete disorder in half an hour, and did more to destroy discipline in the two or three weeks he was with me than I could undo in twelve months. One of the elder boys himself afforded the explanation. "You see, sir," he said, "he is too soft with them. He was everybody's friend directly he came into the club, and the boys take advantage of him." If you will give yourself the trouble of thinking, you

will remember that it was always the master who was strict and firm, yet at the same time friendly and just, who was most popular at school.

The master who, to use our plain if inelegant language, used to "suck up" to the boys, was both disliked and disobeyed. Moreover, demonstrations of affection, calling the boys "dear Tom" and "dear Ned," and putting one's arm round their necks, are utterly silly and out of place, and will impress no one except old women of both sexes.

And while I am on this subject, I am sorry to say another caution is necessary. Watch your workers, especially if you know little of them before they came to you. Many men volunteer for club work from a sincere desire to find some work which they can do for Christ and His Church more suitable to their abilities and tastes than Sunday School teaching or ordinary Church work. But I am sorry to say fifteen years of club work has taught me that some men volunteer from a very different reason, and use the opportunities of club work for the worst of purposes. So watch your workers carefully, at any rate at first, and if you have any reason to distrust a man, get rid of him at once. It is far better to run the risk of losing a good man, than of keeping a bad one. There need be no trouble: just tell the man that after watching him carefully you don't think he is well suited for the work, and won't trouble him to come any more. You won't

have any difficulty with him, especially if your judgment is correct. He may bluster a little, but do not be led into any discussion. Just stick to the point that you do not think him suited to the work. Also let it be clearly understood from the first day that a worker is not expected to ask boys to tea at his own house or for a trip up the river or to the theatre without your permission. And this permission, unless there is some obvious reason and the party invited is a large one, should not be given. And if your wishes in the matter are disregarded, the worker should be asked to leave, and the boy cautioned. And if the boy does not obey the caution, see his father and ask him to forbid further visits on the part of the boy to the man objected to. There is no hardship in the matter. The man is presumed to have taken up club work for the sake of the boys and not for his own pleasure or amusement, and if an educated man can find no more suitable or agreeable companion than an errand boy of fourteen or fifteen, he ought to be able to, and is certainly not a fit character for a boy to associate with. And for the same reason all presents and unnecessary treating are to be discouraged. If a man has money he wants to give away, let him give it to the funds of the club. If he wants to do something special and in his own name, let him give a prize for the draughts or billiards, or a challenge shield for running, swimming, or cricket.

But expensive presents, or, indeed, presents of any kind, to individual boys are not to be allowed, and the giving of them is to my mind a fully sufficient reason for asking a man to resign his post as worker. Many people will doubtless think the previous paragraph unnecessary. I am sorry to be obliged to assure those who think so that they are wrong. I do not fear to appeal to all club, camp, and institute workers of experience, and to leave it to them to say if such cautions are needed. However, I have said my say, and the question is one which one is glad to drop.

CHAPTER IV

RELIGION OF THE CLUB

Question of religious tests—Objects of the club, to bring lads to Christ—Uselessness of anything less than this—Objections to compulsory attendance at class considered—Advantage of compulsory Bible class—Religion in the club.

We now come to the most important question connected with the club, the question, namely, of religious tests. What is to be the constitution of the club with reference to the Church and Bible Class? Is membership to be limited to those who attend Church, and to members of the Sunday School or Bible class, or is it to be free to all in the hope that the indirect influence of the club may be in a religious direction? Now there is no doubt which is the easier and pleasanter way, nor which is the way which is now and has long been the more popular. Popular feeling to-day is all against religious tests. And those who would have the Church club free and open to all, and would trust to the indirect influence to do the work, can count on their side the powerful support of the present

Bishop of London. Now, there is no man living to whose opinion on any matter of parochial management I would more readily submit than Dr. Ingram, and there is no doubt that his experience at the Oxford House gives him the right to speak with authority, and yet, as the result of my own experience, experience which in justice to myself I must say is both wide and varied, I very unwillingly, yet quite unhesitatingly, differ from the Bishop. No one who has read it is likely to forget the passage in his *Work in Great Cities*, in which he pleads that the Church club may be a club for Esau as well as for Jacob, for the rough and turbulent lad as well as for the quiet and good. I too would have the club such as will attract the rough manly boy as well as the quiet gentle lad, but when the Bishop goes on to conclude that this end can only be attained by foregoing religious tests, I differ from him at once. The whole question needs to be discussed from the very beginning if we are to arrive at a right conclusion.

The first question then is—What is the end and object of your work among boys? And to this I answer without hesitation: To bring them to a knowledge of Christ as their God and their own Saviour. Nothing less than this is worth doing. For nothing less than this would I take the trouble of crossing the road. He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son hath not life.

People talk glibly about civilising boys and giving them higher ideals. Does anybody really suppose that a young man of the middle classes, whether he is a parson or a layman, is such a wonderful and admirable being in the eyes of a working boy that a couple of hours a night in his presence will change the boy's whole views of life, and standards of moral judgment, and supply him with an overmastering zeal for a similar ideal, zeal able to support him in the temptations of the workshop and factory? Why, the working lad has only just left off—if he has quite left off—despising the middle class young man as a toff. I think the comparative fusion of classes brought about by games, more general education, and the conditions of modern life generally, has done much to remove the bitterness with which one class used, even recently, to regard another; but the idea that the working lad regards the middle class young man as an admirable being to be respected and imitated is a piece of nonsense. And even if it were true that such admiration existed, would it have power to save a boy in the hour of temptation? The devil laughs at civilising influences. What was it that kept the reader pure, truthful, and honest at school? Was it not religion? And if religion failed, I am quite sure an Eton collar, nice manners, and the occasional society of one's House Master did not succeed. When I hear of civilising boys and giving them high ideals, I never know

whether to laugh or cry. Convert a boy and give him a knowledge of Christ if you can, that alone has power against the fire of temptation; but civilisation ideals, and all that sort of thing, without religion to give them a backbone, are useless.

But it will be urged, surely it is a good thing to get boys away from the temptations of the streets. I am not going to deny that, though I have myself very little belief in the plan of making people good by shielding them from temptation. But such a plan is not even possible with working boys. You may have the boys with you for a few hours of an evening, but what about the next day in the workshop? The lads will want something more than the memory of your example, however admirable, to strengthen them against temptation. And the only thing that will do is a real and vital religion, such a religion as boys are just as capable of as the oldest person.

Now I can imagine the supporters of the open club saying, "We quite recognise the need of religion in a boy's life; we feel it as strongly as ever you can do. It is not a question of religion or no religion, but of the best way of leading the boys to religion; and if you attempt to force religion on the boys you will simply set them against it, while if you trust to the gradual influence of the workers and the natural attraction which what is good is sure to exercise over

honest, unspoilt lads, you will win many if not all, and among the many, the best." Now here are two definite statements: first, that the method of enforcing a certain minimum of religion works ill; and, secondly, that the method of trusting to indirect influence works well. Let us put these two questions to the test of practical experience and see how they come out. To take the second first: can any one tell me of any club run on other than a strictly religious basis which has yielded any religious results? I remember a clergyman, in whose parish a vast and expensive club had been erected wholly with Church money but with a "no tests" constitution, telling me that the club was the chief hindrance to all spiritual work in the district. Even as it was in another parish, where the people, on their way to the service of the Three Hours' Agony, used to meet the young men of the Church club in boating costume with their oars on their shoulders going down to the Good Friday Regatta. Or as it was in yet another London parish, where a Working Men's Club met in the Church day schools, yet informed the newly appointed Vicar that religion was not allowed to be mentioned in the club, and that if any notice of the Lent Services were posted in the club-room the committee would have orders to remove it. Or as it has been in a score of other parishes which I have known of, and the records of which are before me as I write. But it will be urged that although no

doubt the mass of members may have remained unaffected, yet many will have been got hold of who otherwise would have remained untouched. But is it so? I saw, a few years ago, the annual report of a large London Lads' Club with a membership of over 300, supported by one of our great schools. The report gave pages and pages of results of gymnastic, swimming, cricket, football, athletic, and recreation clubs, of educational and social work, and thrift and similar agencies. Then came the following item—Religious work; Bible class; average attendance for the year, 2. Does that look as if the leaven of religious influence was at work? Indeed, I heartily endorse the opinion I once heard Dr. Vyvian, now Bishop of Zululand, but then Head of the Charterhouse Mission, express at a Southwark Ruri-decanal Chapter. He had been explaining why he had put an end to the clubs at the Charterhouse Mission, and he concluded with the words: "The ordinary Church lads' club or men's club, Church only in name, supplies what all men are constantly looking for, a platform half-way between God and the devil, near enough to God to be respectable, and far enough off to make no undue claims on his comfort or convenience." This appears to me to be perfectly true.

But, it will be urged, if what you say is true, the men and boys evidently don't desire religion, and can a religion which is forced on them, and which they

only accept because they want to play billiards or swing clubs, do them any good? Will you not make them hate religion? Will you not produce, not religious men and boys, but hypocrites? The fallacy of this argument is in the supposition that, because boys do not spontaneously desire religion of which they know little or nothing, therefore they cannot be taught to love and value it. All this talk about forcing religion on people is pure rubbish. Every parent worth the name forces religion on his or her children. I would ask the reader this question —Did your mother ask you, as a little boy, whether you should like to say your prayers or to go to church, and leave you quite free to do so or not as you like? Certainly not, at least, mine did not. My mother did not ask me if I should like to go to church or not. She said—"It is church time; get your hat"; and if I had not got my hat I should have got something else. Now, of course this treatment of me may have made me a hypocrite; that is a point on which I really can't venture an opinion. But of one thing I am quite certain, it has not made me hate religion. And I maintain that the parish priest stands, in religious matters, *in loco parentis* to many of the lads of his parish. The parents among the working classes, partly through ignorance —ignorance for which the Church in the past is to blame—partly through indifference, and partly through the difficulties of their station in life, often

do little or nothing for the religious education of their children, and the duty devolves on the clergy. And when we consider the difficulties in the way of following religion which meet a boy in a class when there is little or no public opinion in favour of it, I consider it nothing less than a duty to do everything in one's power to produce an atmosphere and to supply that public opinion in favour of outward observances of religion which is so often lacking.

At the same time what amount of outward conformity is to be enforced, and how this is to be done, are very important questions. In taxation the question to be settled is not merely, How much will this tax yield? but also, Will its collection prove irritating and unpopular out of proportion to the amount of revenue raised? And a somewhat similar question has to be asked in the case under discussion. Many people are repelled not because a thing is enforced, but because it is enforced in a troublesome and irritating manner. Now, after many experiments, I am convinced that the best plan with a boys' club—and for that matter with a men's club too—is to have a club Bible class which all members of the club are expected to attend. The great difficulty with many men and lads is that they really know nothing about religion. They have picked up all sorts of wrong ideas about religion, but the Gospel they have not heard. And how shall they hear without a preacher,

and how shall they preach who never get a hearing? You can't preach to men and boys whom you never get a chance of addressing, who never come to church or to class. But if a clergyman has a good and regular audience of men or lads sitting quietly before him for an hour or so every Sunday, then if he can't interest them in religion and make them spontaneously desire to go further, then I say the fault is either his or theirs, and it really does not matter which. All you have a right to ask, all that I have any desire to ask, for religion or for anything else is, that it may receive a quiet, patient hearing. If then people are not attracted there is really nothing more to be said.

Now, I think the advantages of the compulsory Bible class are many and obvious. For the first thing, it leaves the worship of God free from all tests. There is no marking lads in church, no feeling that boys are forced into God's House. And it leaves the really vital things, public worship, confirmation, and communion, as free as they ought to be. And at the same time it affords a constant opportunity for bringing these subjects before the boys and urging on boys, who, as a rule, are surprisingly ready to respond to such a call, the claims of Christ to their entire service and obedience. And it is far easier for a number of boys, who, week by week, have come to Bible class together, to make a forward step together and come to church, or come out for Confirmation,

than it would be for the same boys to do so, one by one. But the special attraction which the compulsory Bible class has for me, is that it is the Church's own method with the young. The Prayer Book does not say, in the service for the Baptism of Infants, that the godparents are to inquire whether the children committed to their care would like to be taught or would wish to hear sermons. What it does say is that they are to *see that the children be taught what a solemn vow promise or profession they have made*, and that they shall *call upon them to hear sermons*. And that is exactly what I do. I can't insure their doing the duty they are taught, nor following the advice given them in the addresses, but I can see that they are taught the duty and that they hear the sermons, and, whatever may be said of a layman, I think that as a clergyman it is my duty to do so. For when the Prayer Book rule about sponsors in baptism is ignored—as it is in so many churches—we are told that the Church stands sponsor for her children. Then let the Church's minister in every parish do the duty of a godparent and spare no effort to see that the young people of his parish are taught the meaning of that admission into the Church of Christ which most of them have enjoyed and of whose glorious privileges most are so ignorant.

Now, how does such a compulsory Bible class work in practice? And first, as to the special bugbear of pious theorists, namely, the making of hypo-

crites. Now I should like to say once for all that I don't believe much in the boy hypocrite. Few boys in any class have the strength of character and fixity of purpose necessary for the sustained acting of a part. But among working lads the playing of such a part is supremely unlikely. The lad who, in workshop or factory, means to confess Christ, is likely to have to suffer something not far short of persecution, and will certainly find little inducement to set up as better than he is. And even if this were not so, how can a *compulsory* Bible class afford an opportunity for hypocrisy? The boy is there not because he either is, or pretends to be good, but because he has got to attend. A voluntary Bible class *might* produce hypocrites, though I have never known it do so, but I really don't see how a compulsory one can.

And if it is asked whether the boys themselves resent the compulsion, I can only say that I have never known them do so.

I once heard a man at the annual meeting of a so-called Church club say that, "If religion were mentioned to the boys they would all leave at once." Then, I say, for Heaven's sake mention it at once and get rid of the boys as soon as possible. What, in the name of all that is wonderful, are the boys there for? But I can't understand what sort of boys they could have been. I have had dealings with some of the roughest, worst, and most ignorant boys

it would be possible to find, as well as with decent working lads, superior mechanics, and boys of the respectable lower middle class, and I have never met such boys. I daresay if the subject of religion is cautiously introduced to a chosen few, with mystery and in corners, the boys will be shy. Hole and corner work is never popular and is sure to arouse suspicion, especially in the minds of boys, for all young animals are suspicious and like to see beforehand what you are at. But if religion is presented boldly and fairly to all alike and without either fear or favour, I am sure—and I know what I am speaking of and do not speak without experience—that it will repel very few.

The boy is an essentially reasonable young animal, and if the matter is put clearly before them boys are sensible enough. Only one must be perfectly clear, definite, and fair. Don't let the boy think you are trying to push him further than you are ready to admit. Don't be or let him think that you are trying to be too clever. When a new boy joins, I say, "This club is a Church club for Church boys, and if you join you will have to attend the Bible class. I don't keep this club for the pleasure of your sweet company (at this point the boy grins), nor simply to teach you draughts and billiards. This club is to help boys to stick to their Church, and if you don't mean to do your best you had better not join. Now I don't say that if you miss one Sunday you can't come into the

club the next week; that would not be fair; but I do say if I find you coming one Sunday and missing two and generally trying to do as little as you can, out you will go in half no time." The chances are that a week or two after he has joined the boy will try the experiment of missing Bible class. Asked for the reason, he explains that he was ill. Pressed for further details, he looks as doleful as he can, and says he had the headache or the earache—it is generally one of these, they come on and off so easily and leave no mark. Then the following dialogue occurs:—

"You were out in the morning?"

"Yes, sir; I think the sun (or the cold) brought it on."

"You were out again in the evening?"

"Yes, sir; I had to go to my auntie's" (this with a pathetic appearance of being hurt in his feelings at your unsympathetic questions).

"And you went to work this morning?"

"Oh yes, sir, I am all right again to-day."

"Well, my son, I know those Sunday sicknesses and I don't like them; now just remember this, next time you have one let it last you a fortnight, for that is the length of time you will be out of the club. This sort of rubbish won't do with me. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir" (about the truest word he has yet spoken).

It was merely a try on, and once the boy has settled down he will become a keen and regular attendant at Bible class, and very likely a year or so after the same boy will be a candidate for Confirmation and be urging you to speak to this or that boy who, he is sure, would come forward with a little encouragement.

A more difficult case to deal with is that of the boy who "had to go out with father," or "had to go to his auntie's to tea." One does not like to interfere with family arrangements, and once in a while such an excuse may be accepted. If, however, it becomes at all frequent, it is best to see the parents, explain the position clearly, and make it plain that the club rule *must* be kept. I have tried the experiment, in cases where it seemed impossible for a boy to attend class, of letting the boy qualify in some other way, as, for instance, by attending church instead, but nothing really compensates for the loss of the regular systematic teaching which can be given at class, and though, of course, willing and intelligent attendance at divine service is the ideal to be aimed at, compulsory and unintelligent attendance at a service which is not understood, and cannot, in the nature of things, be adapted to suit the particular stage of the lad's development, is not to be desired. On the whole I think it is the best to stick to the rule that club members must be regular at Bible class. Of course, where a boy works on alternate Sundays he

must be allowed his mark on Sundays when he is working. But I shall speak of that in the next chapter.

As to religion in the club itself, a certain amount of care should be exercised. The idea that religion is a thing for Sundays only and must not be mentioned in the club should be energetically resisted. At the same time the club should not be used as a place for buttonholing lads who have come to box or play games and naturally do not want to be talked to about religion at such a time. I find the best way is to assert the religious character of the club by posting all notices of the Bible class, Confirmation classes, classes in preparation for Holy Communion, etc., on the club notice boards, and by introducing the subject of the religious work of the club quite freely whenever I have occasion to speak to the club as a whole, but not to speak to individual boys on the subject of religion except perhaps just to ask, "Couldn't you get to the Preparation class last night, Albert?" or to remind a boy who has been irregular, that the Preparation class is to-morrow. If you want to do more than that, much better to ask the boy to come and see you in your own room. On the other hand, if a boy introduces the question of religion in the club, discuss it freely. Boys often like to discuss difficult points or to ask about things that puzzled them in the Sunday Address, and when they find such things are not forced on them in the

club, will often raise the questions themselves. The others gather round, and if you insist, as of course you would, on all such questions being quietly and reverently handled, much good is often done.

CHAPTER V

THE CLUB BIBLE CLASS

Conduct of the class—Character of the lesson—Church attendance arising out of the class—Prizes and the prize-giving—Visiting—Report cards—Evening visiting.

It may be as well now to go in some detail into the question of the Bible class. The details of the Bible class will, of course, differ with different men and under different circumstances. With most clergy the time of the class will have to depend on their many other engagements, but there is no doubt that if an hour too near dinner on the one hand, or too near tea on the other, are chosen, the class is sure to suffer. I have known many boys who would come to class dinnerless trusting to mother to keep something hot for them in the oven afterwards, but one wants to remember that the Sunday midday meal may be the one really good hot dinner that the boys get, and that it is not fair to expect too much. Where it is possible let the boys themselves settle the time. When the whole of the middle of Sunday afternoon is claimed by other work, I have sometimes run the Bible class in two shifts—one say from 1.45 to 2.30

and another from 4 p.m. to 4.45, leaving it free to a boy to attend one one week and another perhaps the next, as domestic arrangements made it possible. The only rule in such matters must be to do the best one can and make it as easy as possible for the lads.

I find three-quarters of an hour long enough as a rule, and my plan is as follows :—

Hymn.
Prayers (all kneeling).
Hymn.
Portion of Scripture read and explained.
Hymn.
Grace (said standing).
Marking of register and dismissal.

I do not pretend, of course, that my arrangement is the best, and certainly not the only one, but I give it for what it is worth. The boys like the singing, and the time left for the address, twenty or twenty-five minutes, is quite enough for the boys and certainly quite enough for the speaker. Insist on proper kneeling during the prayers; the habit of squatting for prayer to God is not to be encouraged. Put the matter plainly to the lads, pointing out that they would never treat you with the rudeness and lack of manners they display towards God. At the same time it is well to recognise, and to show that you recognise the difficulty, namely, Sunday trousers. In

one place where the floor was dirty and I could not provide hassocks, I placed an old newspaper thickly folded on each chair. This was put by each boy on the floor when he knelt and replaced on the chair after prayers. At the close of the class one boy collected them all and put them away for next Sunday. The idea was suggested to me by seeing how boys would kneel on their caps and Prayer Books —the latter a habit not to be commended—showing that they feared dirty and not merely hard boards. The boys appreciated the fact that I could understand the difficulty.

The lesson itself should be, at any rate, for some years and for all but the elder lads, quite simple Bible teaching. Doctrine, except in so far as it rises out of the story, may safely be left to be taught in the Confirmation classes. Then plain, thorough, and fearless church teaching will be needed. But it is necessary in the Bible class to remember that your audience are very, very ignorant even of plain Bible teaching. I knew a man at Cambridge who addressed a class of rough lads on Proofs of the Existence of God, and though that is an exceptional example of folly, I know that it is far easier to err on the side of over difficulty than on the side of over simplicity. On the whole, it is, I think, best to take a simple Bible story from the New or Old Testament and then let your lesson fall into three divisions: first give the story—which you will just have read

out of the Bible—in your own words, trying to be as vivid and pictorial as possible; then draw out one or two simple lessons; one rather than two, and certainly not more, and then apply the lesson or lessons to the circumstances of the lads' lives as you know them. And oh, my brethren, forgive me if I add, say what you think and not what you feel you ought to think; talk of what you know and not of what you have heard; and trust to what you yourself have learned by experience of the boys before you and not to what goodie books tell you about working lads. The average working boy of fiction is about as much like the real article as the boy hero of a school story is like what you and I were at school. And a very small touch of unreality will spoil the best address. Illustrate what you say as much as possible with suitable anecdotes—avoiding such as will make the boys laugh—and remember that there is no audience so difficult to hold as one of young lads, and on the other hand none which it is more necessary to hold, for disorder begins when the interest of the lesson fails. Very few men have enough authority and force of will to keep a large class of boys quiet and orderly when once they are thoroughly bored and impatient. On the other hand, as long as you are fresh and interesting the question of discipline need not arise. I have not found it much good trying to get a large class of boys to use their Bibles much in class. Few, especially among the younger boys,

have education or sense enough for looking up references and comparing passages. As you get to know your boys better, however, you will very likely find a few among the elder boys who would value the opportunity of some regular systematic Bible study. In that case it is a good thing to form a small and, of course, voluntary Bible class to meet for an hour once a week for the careful study of a portion of the Bible. I have found St. Luke, the Acts, and Isaiah good to begin with, and the Expositors' Bible forms an admirable guide for the Class Leader.

In the Sunday class itself it is not much use trying a consecutive course of lessons. Even among the boys who are perfectly regular there is little power of continuous attention lasting over some weeks, and all the boys are not regular. It is much better to make each lesson quite self-contained. At the same time you may and should have a course mapped out *in your own mind.* And if any large number of boys have to work alternate Sundays, it is a very good thing to treat each subject twice over on two consecutive Sundays, merely varying the passage of Scripture on which the teaching is based and the illustrations with which it is enforced. Thus, if you were speaking of each boy having work to do for God and being responsible to God for the use of all his opportunities and blessings, you might take the Parable of the Unjust Steward one Sunday and that of the Talents the next, and, while illustrating each with different

anecdotes, might draw substantially the same lesson from each. The boys who hear both will enjoy the second lesson all the more for having heard the first —for among simple and uneducated people the familiar is more welcome and enjoyed than the novel or original—and the boys who miss either the first or the second will still not miss the special lesson.

As I have said, consecutive doctrinal teaching may well be left to the Confirmation classes, and the classes in preparation for Holy Communion. At the same time the great fundamental truths of Christianity may be and should be treated when the passage of Scripture read suggests them or when the season of the Church year requires it. Boys readily respond to the right sort of teaching about Baptism (God giving us the New Human Nature of His Son Jesus Christ). Conversion (we giving ourselves to God). Confirmation (the gift of the Holy Spirit who gives life, *i.e.* power to do work). Holy Communion (the Sacrament in which we receive food for our souls; the Memorial Sacrifice in which we remind God of our claim on Him and so can pray with certainty of being heard; the Offering of Praise in which we show forth how great things God has done for us). The Incarnation (Christ bringing into the world a new, pure, Human nature, a well of that strength and purity we feel our need of so much). The Atonement (our need of a Saviour). The Resurrection (our pledge that Jesus is alive and near

us, and our pledge that we too can rise to newness of life). The Ascension (a Man in Heaven, one of our own race, our Ambassador to the Heavenly Court, our Advocate because He knew the temptations and difficulties of the workshop and street). Whitsuntide (the descent of that Spirit whom we too can receive, and the Birth of the Church of which we are members, for which we are pledged to work).

Only let all your teaching be constructive and not destructive. Boys don't want to hear about the errors of this or that sect. They do want to hear the Gospel. And so too in dealing with positive evils. Never fail to speak as occasion serves of the sin of drink and of gambling and of foul language. But long and frequent tirades against these things do little good and are at best tedious and uninspiring. Let your opinions—as for instance that gambling is *sin* and teetotalism at any rate the safer and better way—be clearly known, and then drive out evil by putting in good. And, on the subject of impurity, I would say, do not speak to the ordinary Bible class at all. I may be wrong, and I know that many excellent people disagree with me, but the subject, at least in the hands of most men, seems to me eminently unsuited for treatment in class. How it should be dealt with, and dealt with it must be, I shall hope to show when I speak of Confirmation.

If the room in which the class is held is comfortable, especially if there is a fire, it is a very good thing,

if you have time, to let any of the lads stop after class for a chat. Don't invite them to, but if one day two or three do stop behind chatting, ask them to sit down round the fire. It will soon become a recognised custom, especially in winter or on wet Sundays. No effort should be made to keep the conversation to religious subjects. Let it be quite free and natural. It is always a good thing to let boys talk to you. Difficulties and doubts will show themselves of themselves, and much informal help can be given and good done in such talks.

There are two things which should be unceasingly impressed on the boys' minds, first, that public worship is not merely a pleasure or a privilege or a thing a man may do or not do as he chooses, but a plain duty to God the wilful neglect of which is sin; and secondly, that the Bible class is not worship, and that a Sunday without worship is mis-spent. At the same time it is well in this, as in all things, to look at the matter from the boys' point of view and recognise the difficulties. They can't go with their parents, firstly, because their parents probably don't go themselves; and secondly, because all tradition and public opinion is against a boy of work age going out with his parents except on a Saturday night to buy his clothes. Even the Yorkshire boy I have spoken of who brought his mother to church with him was careful to explain, "Ah don't sit with her, of course. Ah just shove her in t' pew and go in gallery mysen." On the other

hand, if a number of mates enter church together, it is really no exaggeration to say that most church officers would suspect them of being up to some mischief, and either separate them or keep them under careful supervision all the service. And this boys naturally don't like. If, however, lastly, a boy goes by himself he is sure to feel awkward and out of it. It is much better, where possible, to have a separate part of the church set apart for the lads and young men, as, for instance, a gallery or part of an aisle. Only let the part of the church allotted to the boys be as good as possible. There is really little sense and little consistency in lamenting the absence of boys and lads from church and then saying to them when they do come, "Stand there or sit here under my footstool." And of one thing, if my own experience is any guide, you may be sure. If you show that there is indeed any considerable number of lads and young men willing to come to church and behave well, you will receive the heartiest support and help from the wardens and will arouse deep interest in the congregations.

When you have made a start with a small knot of churchgoing boys, foster the movement carefully. When any lad seems willing to go to church, get two of his mates who are themselves already regular attendants to take him. This is good for the recruit, as setting him at his ease and preventing him from making any glaring mistakes—which might have the

effect of driving him away for good and all—and it is doubly good for the helpers. From the day a lad begins to feel himself a fellow-labourer with God there is good hope for him. And indeed I know few more beautiful sights, and few more pleasing, I am sure, to God, than the sight of two earnest and devout lads looking after a companion, showing him where to sit, finding his places for him, and generally shepherding him through the service. I am not a believer in bribery in religion, but I think there is little harm in giving Prayer Books and hymn-books freely. They may, of course, be given as prizes in the Bible class, but it is hard for a lad to go on going for a year or more to church without a Prayer Book of his own, and my own plan is as follows: I say to the boys, "I don't compel you to go to church; when you have attended Bible class you have done all I insist on. Yet I know you ought to go to church, and if any boy comes to me and says—'I have been to church every Sunday for a month, and I mean, in future, always to go to church at least once every Sunday,' then I will give him a Prayer Book with hymns. Of course, if, when he has got his book, he does not keep his word, I shan't take it away again. But he will be able to feel he has done a mean thing." The objection to the plan is its expense, but it is not really as expensive as it sounds. The S.P.C.K. has a very nice-looking Prayer Book with hymns and a nice picture as frontispiece which

can be bought in quantities at about sevenpence or eightpence each, and it is easy to get some wealthy lady or gentleman interested in your boys to set you up with fifty to start with. Only don't give the boys ugly shoddy books.

The last subject suggests the question of prizes. Personally, I am by no means opposed to prizes. It may be a very old-fashioned idea and mark me as a hopeless fogey, but I seem to discern in life some signs of God dealing to us both rewards and punishments; and even if that is not so, I don't see how we can forego rewards without also foregoing punishments. If a boy's virtue is to be its own reward, his wrong-doing should be its own and only punishment, which would hardly do. Only, if you have prizes, don't let them be competitive. Let every boy who makes a certain percentage of attendance get a prize, provided that he has been a member of the class not less than, say, six full months. The best plan is to put the required percentage very high, and then make allowances for *bona fide* sickness and for holidays. For instance, if a boy goes into the country or to the sea-side for ten days, as many North Country boys and some Londoners do, it is quite reasonable to give them their marks. And so with *bona fide* sickness reported at the time. No doubt, even with a high standard, an expensively large proportion of the boys will get prizes, but, after all, that is what one wants, and it is generally possible

to get some local magnate or generous employer of labour to come and give away the prizes and give a five pound note to the expenses. I am, myself, inclined to make something of a function of the prize giving, throwing it open and letting the boys bring parents and friends to see them take their prizes, having a small orchestra to lead the hymns, and, of course, substituting for the ordinary lesson an address on the aim, objects, and past work of the class and club, and a few remarks from the prize-giver. A gentleman or lady to sing a couple of good religious songs is perhaps not out of place on so special an occasion as the prize giving.

There is one other matter I must deal with before leaving the question of the class, and that is visiting. It is not too much to say that the success of all parochial work with any and every class of person, men and women, boys and girls, depends on visiting. But this is pre-eminently the case with boys. They value it extraordinarily. I was astonished at the answer I once had from a great rough lad of seventeen whom I was trying to console when his favourite curate was leaving. "Cheer up, George," I said, "there are as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it. The Vicar will get a good man to take his place." But George would not be consoled. "Never another like him, sir; never one as will come after us like he has done. You couldn't be away from class or church or communion long without

having him after you." And the boy after all had the root of the matter in him. What is a pastor for if not to go after his sheep? Yet the work unless systematised is very difficult, and it is very easy to overlook just the boy who needs visiting. For if a boy is ill, and you don't visit, the mother, even if she sees you daily, will let him die before she will tell you, and then will complain bitterly that "our Sam lay ill for months and no one came near him or asked after him." The danger is so great a one that I am tempted to illustrate it by a story. In the South I took over a large class of boys from my predecessor, and either just before I came or just after, a lad of seventeen fell ill of a lingering complaint. I had never seen him and did not even know his name. For six months he lay ill, and his mother, who saw me almost daily, never said a word. Then I found out about him owing to looking through an old communicant register. I got his address, which was a new one, from friends in the club, and visited, only to be met with a torrent of reproach for never having visited a lad whose very name I never knew. Yet she was really a very good woman, a regular communicant, and the most devoted mother and nurse I have ever known. When, twelve months later, the boy died, her gratitude for my visits was touching, and she is still a firm and faithful friend. But she 'did not like to speak," and there are hundreds more like her.

On the whole I have found nothing so useful as the following cards. I show one as it is printed and one as filled up and ready to be sent out:—

S. JOHN'S CHURCH. LADS' BIBLE CLASS.

Report for the.....Sundays in.....

Name .....

	Morning.	Afternoon.
Early . .		
Late . .		
Absent . .		

Total marks gained.....out of a possible.....

Signed .....

S. JOHN'S CHURCH. LADS' BIBLE CLASS.

Report for the 5 Sundays in July 1904.

Name: Tom Walker.

	Morning.	Afternoon.
Early . .	2	4
Late . .	2	1
Absent . .	1	0

Total marks gained: 15 out of a possible 20.

Signed A. B., Curate in Charge.

These cards should be filled up and personally delivered to the parents, if possible, on a fixed day

each month. If the Sunday for the boys' communion is the second in the month, then the previous Friday and Saturday is a good time, as the opportunity may be taken of speaking of the lad's attendance. Eighty or a hundred can easily be left in a couple of mornings even in a large and scattered parish, for a long stop at each house is not needed. And a couple of mornings so spent are richly repaid. At first there may seem to be little good done. One just knocks, walks in, lays the card on the table, saying, "Well, Mrs. Walker, Tom's pretty good again this month, but I would like to see him more regular in the morning," and so out again. One is almost tempted to ask whether the labour of taking the cards round is not wasted. Would it not do just as well to send them by post or by the district visitors for the different districts, or even to give them to the boys? Be sure the time is not wasted. The very constancy and regularity of your visits will tell, tell with the boy and tell with the parents. It has the funniest results. One woman once said to me, "My master (*i.e.* husband) seems to set a heap more store by our Steve since there's been a gentleman coming after him." And the monthly visit need not always be uneventful. Eleven times you may call and leave the card, and get nothing more than a pleasant good morning. Then on the twelfth morning you will be met with, "If you could please to spare a few minutes and sit down, I had wanted to speak to you,"

and then out it all comes, all you have been wanting and waiting for, for a twelvemonth. It may be about the boy, and it may be about some trouble which has been worrying them till at length "the master" has said, "There's the gentleman who comes after John Willie, why not ask him about it? He should be here next Friday, it's his day." And so you are more than paid for a twelvemonth's visiting. And the beauty of the card system is that it covers all the lads, regular and irregular, good and bad alike; there is no room for any to drop out.

As, however, the cards are delivered in the daytime when the boys are at work, they are obviously of no use in helping you to know the boys. This, however, is of little importance with the bulk of the boys whom you see regularly in the club, and in other ways of which I shall speak later. There are, however, sure to be some boys for whom the club will present no attractions. These should be visited in their own homes in the evening. If, as will often be the case, they are quiet, studious lads interested in some pursuit, it will be easy to find an excuse for a visit, such as taking the boy a book on his subject, or getting him to show you how far he has got in his work. It is scarcely possible to have a regular monthly visitation in such cases; there are, alas! but thirty-one evenings in the longest month, and such visits can't be hurried over in a minute—but take care not to lose touch with a boy because he does not

come to club. Attendance at club is not necessary to salvation, and it is no crime in the lad not to care for it.

Finally, in all your visiting, with cards or otherwise, insist on the necessity of your being told when the lad is ill. If he is ill enough to be kept away from work he is ill enough for the mother to let you know. Surely she can send you word by a younger child or by a neighbour's child. And encourage the lads themselves to tell you when a mate is ill. And seize your chance of influence when a boy is ill. But I will speak more of the subject of sick visiting later.

CHAPTER VI

VARIOUS WAYS OF GETTING TO KNOW YOUR BOYS

The Sunday evening—Visits to workshops—Saturday afternoon walks—Sick visiting—Clothes and boots—Meals and visits to the clergy house—Dancing class—Cricket and football clubs—Swimming clubs—Various competitions and leagues.

WE will now suppose that you have your Boys' Club in full working order, your boys regular and attentive at Bible class, and your monthly report cards going out punctually month by month. What comes next?

The next thing must be steadily and unceasingly to use every opportunity of getting into close and friendly touch with your boys. The supreme end of all your work is, of course, to bring boys really to the knowledge of the Only True God, and Jesus Christ Whom He has sent. For this the first and most necessary step is, as I have said, to get to know your lads, and to get them thoroughly to know and trust you. And to this end every effort must be directed. I propose, therefore, in this Chapter to

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discuss some means to this end which I have myself found useful.

First among these means is the Sunday evening supper. It is a good thing to have boys in to meals at any time, but dinner or tea may make difficulties with the servants or landlady, and in lodgings, where every guest has to be paid for at a fixed rate, may be very expensive. But the Sunday evening can be a very simple and inexpensive affair. A large jug of cocoa—or, in very hot weather, lemonade—and a plate of cakes is really all that is needed. Of course, more is welcome, and if sweets and fruit can be added so much the better. Avoid, however, sticky things and things needing knives and forks. Also see that each boy has a plate, and a table or chair handy to put it and his cup on. The polite drawing-room art of balancing a large piece of cake in a small saucer, and balancing that on your knee, is not known among working boys, and a catastrophe makes you and the boys uncomfortable. The great matter, however, is the choice of your guests. If you choose the guests yourself, you may ask boys who simply won't meet, and are pretty certain to get an uncongenial set. Much better ask one boy and let him suggest the other names, you afterwards asking them. Four or five are ample. At first the boys will be a little shy, but the skilful introduction of suitable subjects will soon set them at ease. A few photographs are useful, old college groups in which they can

pick you out; college pots on which your name occurs, and anything which will serve as a peg on which to hang questions about that wonderful public school and college life of which they have such queer ideas. It will be a great source of pleasure if the boys are allowed to wander round the room looking at books, pictures, and photographs, and handling anything they like. Everything they see and touch will suggest some subject of conversation, and when you have all tongues going at once you will know your evening is a success. It is necessary to remember that, however late it may be, the boys will never make the move to go; when it is time to break up—and remember they have to be at work early the next morning—you must be like an Eastern monarch, and say, "You have my leave to go," or words to that effect. One thing, however, I would add. Such an evening must not be a privilege for the favoured few. Don't begin them unless you mean to go through with them. Keep a list of your guests and work steadily through the whole club. There should be no suspicion of favouritism. No boy is more unpopular, and justly unpopular, with his companions than the pet boy who is always in the curate's room.

These evenings may be made to yield another pleasant bond of union and sympathy between you and your lads. If they get talking about their work, as they are sure to do, you may find that a number of them work at the same place and would like to

arrange for you to be shown round the works. A word to a friendly foreman will do the trick, and it will help you to realise the lad's life and difficulties when you see the neat little boy in the Sunday suit changed into the oily little imp in corduroys, grimed to the eyes in the big steel works, or sweating in a ragged shirt and pair of trousers in the glare of the glass furnaces. And you will often get a chance of a friendly word to some godly foreman who will speak feelingly of the dangers and temptations of the work-shop, express his delight that the lads should be "getting some religion," and tell you, perhaps, his own efforts as Sunday School teacher or Class leader. And, whatever happens, a visit to a lad's work, provided you go with his knowledge and consent, never fails to do good.

Another thing which may spring from the Sunday evening is a visit with a small party of lads to the local museum, cathedral, or other point of interest, on a Saturday afternoon. I have known a visit to the cathedral, distant about a quarter of a mile from the boys' homes, open at all times and seasons to any of them, to be regarded as a great treat and favour, though the cost of the visit to the curate who conducted the party was just nothing at all. And such an afternoon's visit may lead in time to the formation of a regular Saturday afternoon ramblers' club, with boundless opportunities for good, or even perhaps to a small class for the study of Church history, or of some similar subject.

But the greatest opportunity comes when a boy is ill. Never miss this chance of influence. If the boy is seriously ill, you will probably find the room crowded with neighbours, who make sick visiting at all times difficult. If, however, the illness is not serious, or if it is very long and tedious, your chance is a good one. Don't be in a hurry to force religion to the front. Be content to take a book or a few old magazines for the boy to look at, some fruit or jelly if the money will run to it, and, above all, a cheerful countenance and a few pleasant words. At the same time you should certainly pray with the boy; you need not be afraid of frightening him. I find it a good plan to ask if he has said his prayers, not, however, pressing for a direct answer, and then, after saying how easy it is to forget one's morning prayers when one is in bed all day, to suggest saying them with the boy. This makes the ordeal less trying, less like praying for some one at the point of death. And you may give the boy a practical lesson as to what morning and evening prayer ought to be like, a very necessary lesson, as I shall hope to show when I deal with the question of private prayer. If the illness is likely to be a long and tedious one, the opportunity should be seized for a little steady teaching, the reading and explaining of a portion of Scripture, etc. But make your visit bright and cheerful so that the boy may look forward to it. The morning is, I think, the best time.

I am not in the least a believer in a parson trying to be Jack of all trades and interfering in a doctor's business. At the same time there is no harm and often much good in carrying a clinical thermometer. You will sometimes find boys up and about who ought to be in bed. Any boy whose temperature is up to 100° should be in bed; if it is over 101° he should see a doctor.

One of my lads had a temperature of nearly 104°, when his mother wanted him to go out and get a little air and brighten himself up. I insisted on his going to bed and having a doctor. He had pneumonia and pleurisy, and only just pulled through. Find out also about the boy's clothes. It is a delicate matter and wants tact, but it is very necessary. I have known delicate lads come to class in neat serge suits and brown boots, and go to work in a pair of corduroy trousers (strong, but with no warmth in them), a wretched print shirt all cotton, and a thin coat, and with boots letting in water. It is a good thing to keep a stock of old boots, old, but not past mending, old clothes, and warm flannels. Warm knitted waistcoats with sleeves are splendid, as they can be worn at work and keep the back warm when the boy has his face to a furnace and his back—where with peculiar lunacy the ordinary waistcoat is thinnest—to a draught. Your old school and college friends will send you the old things; your mother and sisters, the old ladies of the parish, and the work-

ing party should make the new ones. These may be either given or sold.

There is no harm, if you can afford it or if any kind friend will supply funds, in giving a boy a couple of sets of flannels, a stout pair of boots, or a nice suit; the present is, as it were, to the mother rather than the boy, and does not suggest undue favouritism. Or money, say 15s., which is the price of a decent suit, may be lent and the boy allowed to repay all or part at the rate of 1s. a week. You will generally find the money faithfully repaid when the weekly club penny is paid. This is often a great help, for the destruction of the poor is their poverty. A woman told me the other day that her boy, nearly eighteen years old, had never had a pair of new boots or a single article of new clothing since he left school at thirteen. Everything was bought secondhand, and patched up. His last pair of trousers has cost 1s. 6d. and had "proved a disappointment." At the same time the whole subject of clothes is a delicate one, and it is a great mistake to suppose that because a boy comes into club of a night in dirty corduroys and a ragged jacket, and with a choker round his throat, that he is therefore badly off. You must learn the signs of poverty and underfeeding by experience.

When the boy is convalescent it is a great advantage, if it can be managed, for him to come in daily to dinner for a day or two. Not merely is the plain,

well-cooked, wholesome food a great thing as he gets strong again, but it is a great chance for making a friend. So, too, with boys out of work—if they are honestly trying to find it, a point on which the candid criticism of the boys' club may be safely trusted—and with delicate and ill-fed lads on such days as they can manage, say Saturday. Free-handed hospitality is, of course, only possible to a man who has not got to consider expense. Even, however, when a convalescent boy, or one out of work, can't be asked to dinner, he may well be asked to your rooms. It will be treat enough for him to sit in an easy-chair with a magazine or to sleep on the sofa. One boy, looking at my small and rather dingy rooms over the club, said once, with a deep sigh, "I wish I had a beautiful room like this where I could sit whenever I liked." And another who had been ill came just after breakfast, slept on the sofa till dinner, had dinner, slept till tea, had tea, and went home to sleep all night, and continued the performance for nearly a week.

To pass to more direct and active ways of influencing the lads and getting to know them. Games afford, as I have said, a valued opportunity, but one not always easy to use. One of the best things, where it is possible, is the dancing class, or dancing social, for it touches lads at their most difficult age, and brings them into touch with the clergy just at the time and under the circumstances when, without

the class, they would be most likely to avoid them; I mean, of course, when they begin walking out with girls. Many serious people, I know, condemn dancing altogether, and I honour and respect their scruples. But I do not share them, and even if I did I should think it a lesser evil for the lads and lasses to dance in my presence, quietly and happily in a lighted schoolroom, rather than to do their courting in dark streets, or to go to low dancing halls. At the same time the dancing class is a difficult matter to manage, and should be absolutely in the hands of the clergyman in charge. A good thing is for this clergyman, one night a week or one night a fortnight—once a week is not too often—to open the schoolroom for dancing, strictly by invitation. He can then make it quite plain that romping, giggling, and rude behaviour generally will not be allowed, and that persons guilty of it will not be invited. If the building is licensed for dancing and dramatic purposes—and it is a very good thing to have a parish hall so licensed—a small charge, say a penny a night, may be made for the gas and the payment of the pianist, though some kind friend will often play for nothing. If, however, the building is not licensed no charge must be made, but a collection can be taken for the pianist, or a steady source of revenue will be afforded by the sale of lemonade and biscuits. This income will often more than meet the expenses if no charge is made for the rent of the room, and in that case the balance

may be spent in giving a really pleasant dance to close the session. I am myself inclined to allow the regular meetings of the dancing class in Lent, though not of course in Passion Week or Holy Week, and the social or closing dance should not, of course, be in Lent. The whole conduct of the class requires firmness and tact, and had better not be attempted till a man has been running his club for some time, and has his elder lads well in hand. At the same time the class is a very valuable means of holding the elder lads just when the club is beginning to lose its attractions for them, and it is besides, as the late Father Dolling points out in his *Ten Years in a Portsmouth Slum*, a valuable way of getting to know your boys' young ladies and your girls' young men.

The question of outdoor games, of cricket and football clubs, presents far more difficulty. Indeed, I know no branch of club work at once so difficult, and in its results so unsatisfactory, as the managing of a boys' cricket or football team. To begin with, it is very expensive. In the country where the ground may be had for the asking, and where all the outfit needed is limited to the football itself, or the bats, stumps, and ball, the matter may be different, but in towns it is hardly possible to get a ground on which any but children will play without paying heavily for it, especially in provincial towns, where the enlightened policy of the London County Council in providing a certain number of cricket and football

grounds has not been followed. In big towns, too, it is often difficult to arrange fixtures without joining one or other of the innumerable leagues which spring up every season. And if a team does join a league they must have shirts of the club colours. It is, of course, possible to supply the boys with shirts, allowing them to pay for them at the rate of a few pence a week, but it is scarcely a good thing to encourage a boy to run into debt for what is after all a luxury; and if a boy is not picked to play week after week, it is a severe tax on his honour to expect him to go on paying for a thing he never uses. And the leagues themselves are an infinite source of worry. I don't want to libel all small leagues, but I am bound to say those I have had any experience of seem to run simply and solely for the benefit of the promoters. And as long as they do benefit no attempt is made to enforce the rules. I have known leagues in which the individual players were to be under eighteen, and the average age of the team sixteen, in which the league secretary refereed for a team the average age of which must have been twenty at least. And this is a common occurrence; yet, one cannot let one's boys give in false ages. Then, too, the rule of membership is always a difficulty. If the players are picked solely from the *bona fide* members of the club, it is sure to happen that the club does not produce a good enough goal-keeper or wicket-keeper, a centre forward who can shoot, or a reliable slow

bowler. Then you are told that Tom has a mate who, if he would play for the team, would be just the man, but he can't join the club as he is a Roman Catholic, or else his mother is a strict Baptist. If at this point you yield and let Tom's mate play, the other members of the club, and especially the mates of the lad turned out by Tom's friend, are indignant, and, I think, rightly so. On the other hand, if you stick firm and the team continues to lose, the boys, whom, as I have said, have extraordinarily little power of sticking to things, lose interest, the team turns out three or four men short every week; the best men, seduced by the working lad's absorbing passion for medals to wear on his watch chain, go off to other teams, and half-way through the season you realise that the money spent was worse than wasted. And not only so, but several boys remain with a feeling that you have treated them hardly, or, which is perhaps worse for you and them, that they have behaved shabbily to you.

I am afraid my view of cricket and football clubs among lads will seem a doleful one to many, and I should myself be inclined to put it down to my own mismanagement and incompetence in matters athletic, if it were not the experience of several other club managers of my acquaintance who are themselves fine athletes.

Now there are several lines of action open. The best, I am sure, is to make the football and cricket

as nearly self-supporting as possible, for boys do not readily throw away what they have paid for. But this can only be done by starting early, and making the boys pay into the club months and months before the season begins, so that all the apparatus and necessary costumes are bought and paid for, and a certain reserve formed beforehand. Get together a small knot of boys who you know can play, and who know the play of the other boys, and let them vote on all applications for membership of the football or cricket club, and urge them only to elect boys who *can* play. Have a club just big enough to run two teams—thirty is a fair number—enter the first team for a league, and fill a card for the second team with ordinary engagements, which can generally be found if you start early enough. Then pick the best possible team for the league game, but for the second team insist on every boy having his turn. If there is any complaint about playing a poor player in his turn, the retort is obvious, "You should not have elected him if you did not mean to give him a game. You did not elect him, did you, that his pence might pay for your afternoon's fun while he looks on?" The same method of election by all members of the club will go far towards settling the difficulty about recruits wanted to strengthen the team. If they are boys you approve of, and are willing to fulfil the conditions of the club, and the members

of the football club are themselves willing to elect them, well and good, let them join. And, of course, they must pay up the back subscriptions—part of which go to providing the club colours—but if the boy is keen the two or three shillings will be no difficulty, or the members themselves, if anxious to get him, will club pence for his purchase, a piece of professionalism you need know nothing about. As there are sure to be such cases, it is well to start with a club too small rather than too big, as boys joining a club any time before January are generally eligible for the league games, while, as the second team plays friendlies only, it can be recruited at any time.

Another plan, less troublesome, but of course less useful, is to leave the football and cricket teams wholly to the boys, giving perhaps a subscription, and, it may be, allowing to some particular knot of boys the privilege of calling their team by the name of the club, but not taking any active part in the management. The disadvantages of this plan are that if you subscribe to one team you will be expected to subscribe to all, and there will be nearly as many teams as there are boys in the club, each boy gathering round him his own coterie of work or street mates. Also the team you allow to use the club name may behave in such a way as to bring the club into disrepute. But indeed in this as in all things little trouble generally means in the end

much trouble. But whatever plan you follow, be often up at the ground on a Saturday afternoon, or, if the ground is near enough to make such things possible, on the practice evenings. You may not be able to coach, you may possibly not know one end of a bat from the other, but you will always be welcome and always useful, if only to settle disputes and prevent the visiting team from using bad language. I say "the visiting team," but you will be perfectly right to stop bad language on another team's ground. If one of the opposing side swears, whether on our ground or theirs, I take care, at the first occasion, that the offender should know I have heard. On the second occasion I ask him to take me to his captain, and tell him, in the presence of his captain, that if it occurs again I shall stop the game and lay a protest before the league committee, claiming the game. This is a far better plan than complaining to the referee. He is often afraid to support you, and if he is a weak man and the other team contains a few blackguards, they may continue for the fun of putting him in a hole.

A great deal of useful work may be done with swimming clubs. There is no more healthful or pleasanter sport for a working lad than swimming and water polo, nor any that he can follow at less expense or with better chances, if he is any class, of winning prizes. It is very customary for the

elder boys in the day schools to be taken once a week to the baths and admitted free, and it is an excellent plan for the Curate or Vicar to take this duty himself. It is just a time when you may get hold of a boy whom the Sunday School has never touched, and who, otherwise, when he has left day school may vanish from your sight. But the chief work will, of course, be with the boys who have left school. It is a good thing to go one night a week to the baths with your boys even if no regular club is formed. But there is a great advantage in forming a club. Many municipalities allow a free night once a week to such clubs, and all make arrangements for them to go in at cheap rates. Indeed, I cannot let this opportunity pass of expressing my admiration for and sympathy with the enlightened effort the Town Councils of many and indeed most English towns are making to encourage this health-giving exercise. On the weekly night it is often possible to arrange small contests, plate driving or a team race, with some rival club. But more than this, as I have myself proved, is not merely possible but easy. The baths can generally be hired for a gala, at an inclusive charge for the night so moderate that a small charge at the door will pay for it, as all the friends and relations of the boys will make a point of being present. Prizes—which need be neither many nor expensive—will be readily given by local tradesmen and friends, and the local

Member of Parliament or other magnate may be induced to give a challenge cup for an inter-club team race for the boys' clubs of the city which, if it is swum for annually at your gala, will ensure its success financially. Care must be taken not to infringe the A.S.A. rules—they are quite simple and reasonable—or if the programme contains nothing but events limited to *bona fide* members of the men's institute and boys' club, no question of the A.S.A. rules comes up. Any one running such a gala will, I am sure, be astonished both at the interest it will arouse, and also at the kindly help and support he will receive. The first time I ran such a gala, one of the best water polo teams in England at once volunteered to supply an exhibition game, and for the last two years a swimmer known to all the swimming world has given an exhibition swim.

There is no need to go in detail into the question of harrier clubs, cycling clubs, walking matches, and other forms of athletics, nor into the question of chess, draughts, and domino leagues, boxing, club swinging, and gymnastic displays, and the various similar things sure to spring up in connection with a flourishing club. I will only point out that, if they can have their headquarters at, and be managed from, your club, not merely will your club benefit, but it will enable you to see that they are properly managed, and that the things

which so often spoil these competitions are rigidly excluded.

One thing I feel bound to add: Take care that in this multiplicity of interests the true end of the club, namely, its religious influence, is not lost sight of. The day when you find yourself hesitating to enforce the rule of Bible class attendance lest you should lose your best draughts player just before the league begins, is the day when you should turn from athletic and social matters altogether. Take care that day never comes.

No doubt some people will be surprised that I have made no mention of the Church Lads' Brigade. My excuse must be that I know nothing of it personally. I fancy, however, that there is no reason why it should not be worked in conjunction with such a club as I have described, and it would no doubt attract and hold a certain class of lads not easily held. If, however, I may judge from the large number of boys who have come to me after having been for a time members of the Church Lads' or Boys' Brigade, I think there can be no doubt that many boys soon tire of the military side of the Brigade work. The expense of the uniform, etc., is also frequently urged as an excuse for leaving. I have, however, as I say, no personal acquaintance with the working of the Brigade, of which several excellent club managers among my friends speak highly.

The subject of the C.L.B. leads one naturally to the question of summer camps. I have never ventured to run a camp myself, the distance that has to be travelled from a big city before a suitable site can be found, and the large number of boys necessary if the preliminary expenses are to be justified, having made it too big an undertaking. There are, however, many excellent camps—notably those run by the London Diocesan Society for Befriending Young Men—to which boys are admitted who are not members of any brigade. It is, of course, easy to get the necessary forms for a boy and fill them up for him on his paying the necessary five shillings or ten shillings per week. Much of the pleasure and benefit of the camp will, however, be lost if the boy goes by himself. For one thing, a strange boy among strangers is not certain to enjoy himself; and, for another, in a camp where boys of all sorts are taken it is impossible for the officials to guard against some bad characters getting in, and the boy may find himself in a tent with foul-mouthed or evil-minded lads who, at the least, may make him miserable. A much better plan is to make up a party and go with them. This not only ensures the boys plenty of companionship, but it gives you an absolutely unrivalled opportunity of really gaining the friendship of the lads. Town boys, especially Londoners, are often strangely ignorant of the country, and the moment when they begin to realise their ignorance is psychologically valuable. I have known town lads,

up to every phase of town life, and sure that no one could teach them anything, become curiously subdued, almost cowed, by the vastness and unfamiliarity of the sea and country. This is a valuable opportunity for any one desirous of influencing the lads.

CHAPTER VII

PREPARATION FOR CONFIRMATION

Sacramental teaching—Age for Confirmation—Under twelve or over twenty—Perils of fifteen—Selection of candidates—Preliminary interview—Private prayer—Times of Confirmation classes—Forms to be filled up.

WHEN club and Bible class have been running for some time, you will be justified in looking for some results, and the first and most natural way in which such results may show themselves is in the number and character of your Confirmation candidates. And since a boy's Confirmation is far and away the most important event of his life, between his baptism and his marriage, I propose to treat of the subject at some length. There are some people who will tell you that rough lads drawn from a very poor and ignorant class cannot be expected to be regular communicants. My answer is that for rough lads drawn from a very poor and ignorant class, the Blessed Sacrament is the one thing. Emasculated religion won't do for them; if you don't mean to give them every possible help the Church offers, for God's sake leave them to Rome or General Booth or the red-hot Wesleyans. I don't

like what any of the three will give them, but it will be something able to save in the day of temptation which wishy-washy unsacramental Churchmanship is not. I remember standing years ago in London at the door of my house talking to a lad of twenty, who thought the Vicar had been hard on him. He pointed across to the public-house opposite, and said: "You see that woman, sir, she is my sister, and in an hour she will come home drunk." And then he went on to give me an unprintable account of the home in which he and his brother, poor lads, were the one force making, among every discouragement, for decency and purity, and he finished up with the words: "And where would I be if it weren't for the Sacrament? Why, I'd have swung for one of them any time this six years past if it hadn't been for Church, and I shall yet if the Vicar drives me away. I can't stand it." And I know the boy was right. So I say, let all your efforts be directed towards making earnest, regular communicants, boys who can and will seek grace where it is to be found. And to this end the first steps in a Confirmation class are all-important. The first question to be settled is the best age for Confirmation. I do not mean that you will be able to enforce any age, or that, if you could, it would be in the least advisable to do so. But it is certainly a good thing to have in your mind an ideal to be aimed at. Now I am strongly in favour of an early age for boys, or else leaving them very late. Dr.

Pusey used to say, I believe, "under twelve or over twenty; let me have them with the grace of innocence or the grace of penitence." To this I most heartily subscribe. It is frequently said that little boys in their twelfth year can't be expected to understand what they are doing. Putting aside the unchristian suggestion contained in the objection, the suggestion, namely, that the boys benefit by what they think or feel and not by the Holy Spirit they receive, I entirely deny that they are incapable of understanding what they are doing. I don't know whether I have been fortunate in meeting very clever boys, but I have always found boys of twelve quite able to understand simple teaching about God, their own souls, their need of strength from Christ, the power of prayer, and the value of pleading a sacrifice once offered for them. And if they are as bright and as able to learn as I think them, it seems a pity that they should learn Satan's lessons first. It is also frequently urged that it is an advantage to have them confirmed at the time when their temptations and difficulties are strong on them. The argument is so completely and utterly fatuous and idiotic that I should not quote it if it were not frequently used. It was, indeed, used to me only last Lent by a clergyman of position and experience. Well then, let us be consistent and put off teaching a soldier the use of his weapons till the enemy is on him, and not teach a sailor to swim till he has gone overboard in a rough sea. The thought,

the perhaps unconscious thought, at the back of this argument is the horrible one that the Blessed Sacrament is an attractive novelty, the power of which passes in time. But as the power of the Blessed Sacrament in our lives increases with reverent use, it is well for our boys to be familiar with the weapons of their spiritual warfare, and to use them with the confidence which we have in things we have proved, and that at a time before the Goliaths of sin and temptation are upon us. And the special advantage of presenting boys when about twelve years old is that they can be prepared very thoroughly and slowly, can even act as lay servers at the week-day celebrations for a year or two before, and can, in every way, be more thoroughly dealt with than is possible with boys whose time is largely taken up with work and night school. And then, after Confirmation, they can be regular attendants at the altar, and regular monthly communicants for a year or two, before the time comes for them to go out into the world. Indeed, if, as so often happens at least in the North, they have a year or two in a shop or office opening at 8.30 or 9 a.m. before they are put to a trade, they may be well established as servers and communicants before they have to face their worst temptations. Next to the earliest age I find the age of twenty to twenty-five the best. But at any rate the worst is undoubtedly the age generally selected by the mass of public opinion as the ideal one, namely, fifteen to sixteen. Indeed,

I don't hesitate to say that the selection of that age as the best shows a complete ignorance of boy nature, a contempt for experience, and a neglect of perfectly well-established facts of physiology and psychology. Everything is against a boy at such an age. He is working a man's hours, and very often doing a man's work, with a boy's strength. He has a thousand other things to distract his thoughts, things which have all the charm of novelty. The powers of evil are against him; he has tasted the pleasures of sin and not yet tasted the bitterness of the fruits. But the greatest difficulty lies in the boy himself. He is probably growing rapidly, certainly developing, and all the powers of his being are absorbed in bodily growth and development, leaving very little vital energy over for mental and spiritual processes. Every one who knows anything of boys must have noticed that the age from fifteen to seventeen, more or less, is the age when a boy is most callous and indifferent. There was a masterly article some time ago in the *Spectator* at the time of what was known as the "Plaistow Horror," in which the author commented on the curious hardness and brutality of many really good lads between fifteen and seventeen, and attributed it to just those exigencies of physical growth to which I have referred. And to choose the years from fifteen to seventeen as the time for a lad's Confirmation or as the time when, having been confirmed, he should settle down into a regular and devout

communicant, seems to me the height of folly. Such an age is often unavoidable, but it is, in my opinion, always to be regretted.

In getting your boys to come forward for Confirmation, the two great things are absolute openness and absolute freedom. Let there be no mystery, no buttonholing lads separately, no talking to them in corners. Boys are, as I have said, very suspicious and, like timid horses, will often shy at what they only half see, while they will display no objection to it when they have been allowed to have a good look. And any attempt to use pressure is also fatal. It is not merely wrong in itself, it is wrong policy. I find the best plan is the following: I take the subject of Confirmation at Bible class and speak plainly of it. I point out what it is *not*, *i.e.* making a lot of promises which one may not be able to keep; and what it is, *i.e.* getting the help of God's Holy Spirit. I deal with the objection that so-and-so was confirmed and is all the worse for it, showing that Confirmation is not a conjuring trick for making bad boys into good ones without trouble to themselves, but a way of giving them a new help—help which, if they neglect or misuse it, will certainly do them harm as the kingship did harm to Saul, the gift of prophecy to Balaam, the apostleship to Judas, or the same gift of the Holy Spirit to Simon Magus. I deal fully with the Bible references to Confirmation, Acts viii. 14–18, xix. 1–8; Heb. vi. 1–2, etc., as refuting the Nonconformist

objection, of which they will have heard much at work, that there is nothing about Confirmation in the Bible. Finally, I deal with the Prayer Book teaching about Confirmation, showing that it is not a luxury for the pious few but a duty and privilege for all true Church lads. Then, having dealt with the doctrine of Confirmation, I go on to explain what will be the practice. I shall hold a class, I tell them, once a week, to explain all about Confirmation and the other things a boy ought to know. To this class no one need come who does not wish, and if a boy does come at all he will still be perfectly free at the end to say that, now he has heard all, he would rather not be confirmed, or would rather wait another year. And I am careful to explain that if a boy does withdraw at the end I shall not be vexed with him or think he has gone back on his word, for a boy promises nothing by merely attending the classes. Neither do I, I tell them, promise anything, for at the end of the classes I may tell any boy, even if he has been perfectly regular, that I can't have him confirmed that year. And, in conclusion, I tell them they can take a week to think the matter over and make up their minds, and that, above all, they are to do just what they think right and best, for it will make no difference in my friendship for any boy whether he is confirmed or not.

During the week some boys are pretty certain to tell you of their own accord that they will be con-

firmed. Don't mind if the boy said: "Please, sir, mother would like me to be confirmed." It is only a form of speech, for, if the boy were not also willing, he would not come forward. Other boys will not only give in their own names but volunteer the information, "George would come too if you asked him," or, "Sam would like to be spoke to, if you don't mind." This is very helpful. The speaker may often be made to act as guide, philosopher, and friend to George or to Sam in all spiritual things, to his own infinite profit and the strengthening and assisting of a weak brother. Many boys, however, and those not the least earnest, will require to be met more than half-way. You must ask them, saying, "Well, so-and-so, are you coming to the classes?" and "Well, I don't mind if I do," may be taken as cordial acquiescence. And, above all, keep your promise, and if a boy you have expected to say "yes" says "no" show neither surprise nor displeasure. Believe me, to keep your promise in such cases is not merely good morals, it is good policy. I once asked two of my favourite boys, the very pick of the class, and was met with a half-sheepish, half-angry "No." I simply said, "All right, boys; you are quite right to do what you think best. I can trust you, and I shall not speak to you about it again till next year." Ten days after, they walked into my room and said that, if it were not too late, they would like to join the class. Then one of them, after a moment's hesitation, asked if a clergy-

man got anything for the boys he presented. I said, "Yes, he gets a great deal of pleasure and gratification, but certainly no money." "Well," said the boy, "we thought you did, for Mr. Blank"—mentioning the clergyman of a church they had both formally attended—"was always bothering us to be confirmed, and Walter here thought all clergy got half-a-crown a head for all candidates."

As soon as you have your list of boys complete, or fairly complete—for stray boys are sure to drop in one by one later on—and have visited the parents for their consent as well, have each boy to see you in your room alone. The first thing to do is to speak to him about his prayers. Many people would say this should be done when the boy first joins the Bible class, but after trying both plans I think the time of Confirmation the better one. You need to know your boy pretty well and to have his confidence before such a talk will do any good, and even when the boy is quite friendly and at ease with you, there must be some motive power to make him do what you suggest. If you speak to a boy when he first joins the club, he may listen, and like what you say, but the chances are that he will not practise what has been taught him, and so an opportunity is wasted, for, when you speak of the matter a second time, say at Confirmation, there will be just so much less chance of his following your advice. If, however, you speak to him of prayer just when he has made the effort in-

volved in coming forward for Confirmation, the chances are he will respond. And in speaking of prayer—and indeed in all your teaching—you must be very definite and must take nothing for granted. Many boys neglect prayer because they don't know what to say nor how to say it. I knew one boy who said, every morning and night till he was sixteen, the verse, "Gentle Jesus, meek and mild, Pity me a little child," and then suddenly realised the utter unsuitability of his prayer, and, not knowing what to say instead, gave up prayer altogether. Your boys will need to be taught to pray, and the great questions are, "What shall I teach them?" "What are they able to learn?" Now we must never forget that the true idea of prayer is *free speaking to our Father in Heaven about all that interests us.* But we are exiles from our Father's house—children brought up in a far country who have slowly and laboriously to learn our Father's language by long practice. And with boys of sufficient spiritual development—for intellectual ability goes for little in the matter—this idea may be brought forward. Let the boy get hold of the idea of speaking to God about his whole life, his hopes, his temptations, his sins, his friends, his work, his games. Show him how to say the Lord's Prayer with special intention, applying each petition to the special subject in question. Then give him a penny note-book in which, after consultation with him, you can write down first a general form of prayer and

then a number of special subjects for each day in the week. The general form may be something as follows:—

Morning and Evening.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.
Our Father.
I believe in God the Father who created me.
I believe in God the Son who redeemed me.
I believe in God the Holy Ghost who sanctified me.

Morning.

Thank God, in your own words, for keeping you safe during the past night.
Think where you are likely to go and what you are going to do during the coming day, and pray—
(1) For grace to resist temptations;
(2) For protection from danger;
(3) For power to use all opportunities of serving God.

Evening.

Think where you have been and what you have done during the past day, and then, in your own words—
(4) Confess what has been wrong and pray for forgiveness.
(5) Thank God for all blessings and mercies.
(6) Pray Him to bless all that has been well done.
Pray for his blessing on the coming night, that you may be kept from all adversities that may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts that may assault and hurt the soul.

Morning and Evening.

Pray for your parents, relations, and friends.
Pray for your clergy and Church.
Pray for the special subjects for the day (or these last may be used at night only).

The special subjects should be as varied as possible. An excellent rule for boys is, "Make

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your prayers interesting." A boy ought to be able to talk to his Father about everything that interests him. A boy once asked me if he might pray to get into his school football team. I told him "Yes," for I knew if he really prayed about it, he would not be likely to do anything shabby or underhand in the matter. The arrangement of subjects may be something as follows:—

Sunday. The Church, the clergy, the Bible class.
Monday. Relations, friends, benefactors, one's old schoolmaster.
Tuesday. Missions, especially the particular mission supported by the lads' class.
Wednesday. One's work and the people one meets at work, at night school, or at other times during the day.
Thursday. Communicants, Confirmation candidates, mates who are careless or irreverent at Communion.
Friday. Sinners, people one knows who drink or swear or gamble, or are in temptation.
Saturday. The sick, the dying, and those at rest.

These suggestions are the barest outline. Subjects will constantly suggest themselves, and when the boy finds more things to pray about than he can find time for in a week, and has to make his cycle of prayer a fortnightly one instead of a weekly, then, humanly speaking, there is no fear of his ever losing the love of, or power for, prayer. This special intercessory may either be quite informal or something of the following kind may be used:—

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Come, Holy Ghost, and teach me to pray for—
Lord have mercy upon us.
Christ have mercy upon us.
Lord have mercy upon us.
Our Father (with special intention for —).
Prayer for — in your own words.
Any Collect you may remember which seems suitable.
"Nevertheless not my will, but Thine be done."

And the same over again for the next subject in the list, and so on through them all.

Now I quite admit that such prayer is beyond the capacity of most boys, even as an ideal to be aimed at. But I repeat, there is no sort of connection between education and intellectual ability on the one hand and power of prayer on the other. The Apostles were unlearned and ignorant men; and though I certainly have not known many, I certainly have known some quite rough lads with wonderful power of and love for prayer. And these must be made the most of.

For most boys, however, a simple book of prayers will be needed. On the one hand the prayers must be simple, or the boys, who are often extraordinarily ignorant, won't understand them. On the other hand, they must not be childish, or the boys won't use them. I have never seen a really good book of boys' prayers suitable for all, or even most boys, and for many reasons I don't expect I ever shall. The best I know is a little book called *Private Prayers* (Paper 1d., cloth 3d.) published by Griffith Farran & Co. It

is very, very elementary, but makes a good book to begin with. I have found it a good thing to mark one or two prayers (say the invocation, Lord's Prayer, prayer for the day, and Grace) in the morning prayers with red ink, and to explain to the boys that while they should try to use all the prayers every morning, yet, if they are late and pressed for time—as they well may be if they have to start for work at 5.30 a.m. daily—it will be enough to say what is marked. For if not, they will either miss prayers altogether, or gabble over them, by which their consciences will be offended.

Finally, explain to boys that while they can and ought to pray in bed if they are ill, yet if they say prayers in bed because they are too lazy to kneel down, or too timid to let their room-mates see them pray, they are merely mocking God and had better not pray at all.

The next thing to be settled in the private interview is the most convenient time for the boys' class. It is not likely that all boys will be able to come on the same night. Too early an hour will not suit those who work late in shops, too late an hour those who go to work early, as mechanics; too early in the week will clash with the night school of the apprentices and junior clerks; too late in the week will be fatal for the errand boys and van boys. You simply must find out these things and arrange classes to suit all. As to the best number for a class, opinion

differs. Some take each boy separately, but I find that that makes the boy awkward and self-conscious, and I find it difficult myself. On the other hand, too big a class makes it difficult to be certain that you are really reaching each boy and holding his attention. From five to a dozen seems to me an ideal number, the boys will not be too shy to ask and answer questions as they might be if quite alone, and at the same time you can watch each boy and know if he follows you. And, personally, I would rather have more than a dozen, rather than less than four or five.

Finally, the private interview may be closed by making sure of the boy's full Christian name, age last birthday, baptism, etc. It is never safe to take the boy's baptism for granted, nor even to take his assurance that he thinks he has been baptized. Let him find out from his mother when, and if possible where, he was baptized. I always cyclostyle a number of forms like the following, which can be given to the boy at the private interview, and brought back, filled up, at the first class:—

Name in full . .	
Age . . .	on the of last
Address . . .	
Where Christened .	
Date of Christening, if known . .	
Please fill in as fully and carefully as possible.	

The forms are useful for reference, and make it a short and easy matter to fill up the various cards, lists, etc., for the Confirmation day and the communicants' register afterwards.

CHAPTER VIII

CONFIRMATION (*continued*).

The class in preparation—Doctrinal teaching—On sin—On confession—Its value—Need of freedom and openness—Help in preparation—So-called alternatives to confession.

WE have now to consider the question of the actual Confirmation classes and of the teaching to be given. Some books recommend a short office for use at the classes. I do not see the need of this. The class is for instruction and not worship. Prayer is all that is needed, and even this may well be left to the end of the class, both because it can then spring out of, and sum up, the teaching given in class, and also because some of the boys are perfectly certain to be late, and it is very distracting and unedifying to have them marching into the room during prayer, or, if the door is bolted, to hear them outside.

The first object of the class is instruction, clear, definite, consecutive instruction in the Faith. Remember this: all boys think. Many, as Shorthouse remarks in *John Inglesant*, have a taste for metaphysical inquiry little suspected by their elders. They have a right to be taught the Faith fully and

soundly. I am often struck when arguing with unbelievers with the fact that the Christianity they reject is a Christianity I myself could never accept, being but a poor wretched travesty of the true Gospel. And, indeed, in all ranks of life the great need of the day is sound dogmatic teaching. The missioner of a big Public School Mission once told me that he should be ashamed to present for Confirmation the fourteen year old son of a Southwark costermonger, as ignorant of the first meaning of Christian doctrine as most of the men who came down from Oxford or Cambridge for a visit to their old School Mission. I am sure that the full Gospel as it is taught by the Catholic Church supplies the one absolutely satisfactory, reasonable, and consistent philosophy of life, and it is this which you must give to your boys at the time of their Confirmation, or you may never have another chance. Give them plain teaching about God, about man made for God's glory and his own happiness, about the fall, as involving the spoiling and shattering of the race, about the plan of salvation for man's restoration, and about the Church and the sacraments as the means whereby that plan of salvation is put into practice in each individual life. Boys want something plain, reasonable, and coherent. They are quite ready to believe what they can't understand ; they are capable of great faith and wonderful reverence, but they don't like windy platitudes, and they have an extraordinarily keen scent for any unreality. If this book finds a

publisher, I think I shall follow it with one of plain teaching for boys, for only by experience can one learn what boys need and what they will take.

The Catechism makes an admirable basis of teaching, but I don't think it is necessary to insist on the candidates repeating it by heart. The Prayer Book clearly distinguishes between the Creed and the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments which they are to learn by heart, and the Catechism in which they are to be instructed. If they have been thoroughly grounded in the Catechism at day school, it is unecessary to make them learn it by heart; if they have not, it is very hard and, I believe, rather useless to call on them to commit it to memory.

At a certain point in the instruction the question of sin will come up, and this is a crucial question. Conviction of sin is, and always will be, the first step in any religion worth having. Some people think that a healthy boy can't feel sorrow for sin. That is certainly not so. There need not be, and there ought not to be, any morbid brooding over the sense of sin, but true repentance there can and must be. Indeed, if the boy is a healthy-minded, unspoilt boy, he may have a really tender conscience when it is aroused. The difficulty is to arouse this sense of sin. I have found it a good plan to suggest to a boy that, as he is now going to be confirmed, he should try, if only for one week, to be absolutely perfect, explaining what this will involve, as, for instance, regular prayers, reverent

worship, obedience at home, diligence at work, sweet temper and unselfishness at all times, no bad language, gambling, or quarrelling, no lies, etc. The boy, in merely making the effort, is obliged to watch himself, and notices many little sins he would otherwise have committed without thought, and forgotten without penitence, and is thus aroused to a sense of what he really is. I have had a boy come at the end of the week and say he would rather not be confirmed, as he was sure he was not fit. Of course, it was when he realised his own weakness and need of help that, for the first time, he was fit. I have always thought that Christ told the lawyer that tempted Him (St. Luke x. 25) to "keep the commandments" because He saw that his spiritual life was shallow and thin, and wanted him to learn by experience his need of help before he could keep them.

Next to the question of sin comes the question of confession, and on this subject I wish to speak with absolute plainness. There are, I know, people who maintain that private confession finds no place in the discipline of the Church of England. To them I have nothing to say. If a study of the Prayer Book itself fails to convince them, nothing I can write is likely to have any effect. On the other hand, there are, I am told, clergy who regard confession as a thing to be pressed on all, a *sine qua non* of true spiritual life. With this view I have quite as little sympathy as with the last. I believe private con-

fession to be not a food but a medicine, and the medicine which the Church offers to all, but forces on none. And I find that most of my brother clergy and many of the laity agree with me so far. Where I part company with many, I had almost said with most of my brethren, is when it comes to the practice and not the theory of confession. I cannot see that confession is offered to boys by many clergy who admit that, in accordance with Church teaching, it should be offered. It is rank nonsense to say that confession has been offered to boys, when it has never been mentioned in their presence, much less taught to them plainly. Does any man in his sober senses suppose that a boy, having fallen into any sin which troubles his conscience, is likely to study his Prayer Book, find out about confession, and come to his parish priest and volunteer his confession? Can any one quote such a case as ever having occurred? And any one who knows boys knows also that vague general teaching is perfectly useless. It goes in at one ear and out at the other. And yet this is the sort of teaching which many clergy give on the subject of confession. As a bitter satirist of the English clergy wrote a few years ago—

> Although, of course, I much dislike habitual confession,
> And once wrote letters to the *Times* to plead for its repression,
> Yet still, when speaking to our lads before their Confirmation,
> I've *hinted* at a ministry of reconciliation;

With what result I well know. Some time ago an excellent clergyman was quite offended with me for suggesting that he did not teach confession plainly. He taught it, he said, openly, in season and out of season. Yet a little time after two boys whom he had just presented for Confirmation came to live in my parish and were commended to me by him. They were perfectly furious when confession was mentioned, and declared that "Mr. Blank never spoke of such a thing." And a devout lady, a friend of my own, who had lived in Mr Blank's parish twelve years, assured me the subject was never mentioned. I don't mean to suggest for an instant that the man told me what he felt to be untrue. Not in the least. He really believed he taught confession. But, like too many others, he handled the matter with such tact and delicacy that no one knew he was speaking of it. But that sort of thing is quite useless except to set the clergyman's own conscience at ease. The boys, in nine cases out of ten, don't know he is saying anything. In the tenth case they feel that something mysterious is being hinted at which they don't understand, and they at once grow restless and suspicious. To such men I would like to put one or two questions: If your teaching about communion were as vague and as carefully shrouded as your teaching about confession, how many communicants would you have? If the Prayer Book says there is a benefit in absolution, are you prepared to say there

is not? If the Prayer Book says that a lad who cannot quiet his own conscience may come to you for that benefit, will you say he may not? Or do you think that either boys have no consciences to offend, or never do anything to offend them?

The truth of the matter is that very few people believe that boys have any consciences. A clergyman asked me once, "Do you mean to say that any boy, outside a story-book, ever finds he can't quiet his own conscience?" The best answer to such a question will be supplied by one or two examples taken from hundreds in my own experience. Very early in my clerical life a woman asked me to speak to her lad, who had given up going to communion. I talked to the boy and prayed with him, and tried to get at what it was that troubled him. And I could see I was not getting a bit the forwarder. Then one day I spoke to him quite plainly of confession, telling him what it was for and how it was done, and told him to take a fortnight to think of it. Long before the fortnight was up he came to me and said, "I shall come." I was new to the work, and said, "Are you sure you know what I mean?" "Oh yes," he said, "I am coming to confession. I am sure I ought to." And come he did, and became a regular communicant. Next Easter I asked him if he wanted to come again. "No," he said, "but I should come if I felt I ought to, and I shall come if I ever need it. But I hope I shan't have to." Another lad whom I

knew got up when his mother called him on the boys' Communion Sunday for five months running, went out, and watched the others going into church, then walked about till they came out, and then went home. When I spoke to him he said, "I could not go in, I was afraid; I was not fit." This boy simply jumped at confession, and gave his mother no peace till she gave her permission. And I have had lads who had not come to confession at their Confirmation, come to me utterly on their own accord, and say, "Could I come to confession if I liked? Then I will if you'll have me. I want to make a fresh start." One more story, because it is to the point. I was talking some time ago to an old 'Varsity man, and asked him if he ever went to church. "No," he said, "I never go anywhere. I ran a bit out of the straight at the beginning of my second year at college, and when I went home my mother asked me to go to Communion. I knew I was not fit, but I had not missed a Christmas day since I was thirteen, and it would have broken the old lady's heart if I had said no. So I went. Well, it seemed to finish things. I have never crossed the door of a church since, except that, once a year, when I spend Christmas with the old people, I go to Communion with my mother." Then after a few minutes he burst out, "I wish to God any one had ever taught me as you teach your boys. I believe if I had known about confession *then* I should have gone." Of course he would. If

the matter had been fairly put before him without undue pressing, when he was confirmed, he might, or he might not, have used confession at the time; but when he needed it he would have known what to do. And so with men and boys in every class. They are often lost to religion because, at some crisis of their lives, they feel that they are not fit to draw near to God and they don't know how to get fit, and so they either stay away altogether, or, worse still, draw near unfit and mortally wound their own consciences. All that I claim then for boys is that they should have clear, fearless teaching about confession and be left to use it or not as they like.

And to this end the following will be found a good way: If you are assistant curate, first get full permission from the Vicar. Confession is essentially one of the things on which the man finally responsible for the parish should say the last word. If you find yourself in disagreement with your Vicar on this matter, there are really only two possible alternatives. Do as he wishes or seek a more congenial curacy. I am sorry to have to say anything so obvious. I hope it is always unnecessary. Then, having the Vicar's permission, it is a very good thing, where possible, to have an article in the parish magazine treating of confession, and making these points perfectly plain, namely: 1. That no attempt will be made to press confession on any who don't desire to use it. 2. That no boys under sixteen or girls

under twenty-one will be allowed to come to confession without their parents' express permission. 3. That the class, at the time when confession is being taught, will be open to any who like to be present, and that confessions will be heard at fixed times in the open church. Much of the popular objection to confession is due to the appearance of mystery with which it is surrounded.

When the time comes for treating of confession in class, I always begin, "Now, boys, I am going to speak to you about confession, and I want you to remember from the very beginning that no boy need come to confession unless he wants to. You are quite free to do as you think right, and I shall not think any worse of a boy whether he comes or not." This is much the best opening. If a boy feels he is going to be compelled to come he will harden his mind against the whole thing and simply refuse to listen. If he feels that he is quite free he may still resolve not to come but will feel free to listen and so may be persuaded to his good. I next deal with objections. It is said to be Roman Catholic, but if I were a Roman priest I should say, "You must come," whereas all the Church of England says is, "You may come if you need it." People say there is nothing about it in the Prayer Book, so I explain carefully the well-known passages in the Communion Service, and the Visitation of the Sick, as well as the commission to the priest at his ordination. Then

comes the grand objection, "At any rate it is no good, for no man can forgive sins." I point out that only the king can pardon a condemned murderer, yet if one were in gaol condemned to be hanged one would welcome a pardon signed by the Home Secretary, *because he is the king's minister with authority in such matters.* So too, though God alone has power to forgive sins, yet we gladly listen to His priest giving absolution because he is God's minister with authority in such matters. Having thus cleared the way, I go on to explain as clearly as possible how to examine one's conscience, how, where, and under what circumstances confessions are made, and I go carefully through the usual form of confession. I urge boys not to come unless they feel it would do them good, and not to stay away if they feel they ought to come, and above all not to trouble a bit about what I shall think of them. And I conclude by saying that I shall write each boy a letter.

The letter runs something as follows:—

"DEAR BOB,—I am writing to you, as I promised, about confession. And first of all I want you to remember that you are quite free to come or not as you like. No one has any right to try and force you to come, and you can be confirmed just as well without coming. What I want you to do is this: Take a quiet time by yourself, in church or in your own room, and try to remember all the wrong things

you have ever done and all the right things you have neglected. Think of your thoughts, words, and deeds. How have you served God in prayers, worship, and other ways? How have you done your duty to others at school, at work, and at play? How have you done your duty to yourself by trying to cure all your faults and make yourself a better boy? Go slowly through the ten commandments, trying to remember what I said about each. Don't think that because a sin was committed a long time ago that it does not matter. When you have finished, ask yourself, 'Would it do me good to confess all these sins and get them wiped away by absolution?' If you feel quite sure that you have repented and that God has forgiven you, that is all right. But if you are not sure, and especially if the recollection of some sins troubles you, don't be afraid to come to confession. Take plenty of time and pray to God to guide you, and then say to me, any time you see me, 'I don't want to come to confession,' or, 'I should like to come to confession.'—I remain, your affectionate friend and pastor," etc.

Across the top of the letter I write in red ink, "Show this to your father and to any one else you like." The writing of these letters is a heavy job but well worth while, for such a letter brings home to a lad the fact that what was said to the whole class was specially addressed to him. Also, as *littera scripta manent*, they prevent any evil-minded persons from distorting one's teaching in confession.

Some boys are certain to come forward at once. I had two lads once who for years resisted Confirmation. When at last, more from the pressure of relatives than anything else, they did come forward, they were irregular and unattentive at class, until I began to speak of confession, when they settled down at once. Directly I asked for names the elder came and said he wanted to make his confession, "and Fred, sir, will come too," he added. They had found what they wanted, the thing which held them back from Confirmation was the feeling that they were not fit. And another lad said to me long after, "I should never have been confirmed if it had not been for what you said about confession." And he became a most regular and devout communicant.

Other boys will refuse confession, perhaps angrily. With them and with all who say no, keep your promise, don't try and force them. And, I would add, keep your promise in the spirit as well as in the letter: don't let them think you are vexed or disappointed in them; don't let them feel you treat them any differently after they have said no. To all boys who say no I have the same answer. I say, "All right, my dear boy, you are quite right to do what you think best. Only, if you ever feel you are not fit to come to Communion, you will know what to do." And you will often get the answer given, I believe, quite honestly, "If I felt I was not fit I

would come to confession at once." And, what is more, they do do so.

There is a third class specially difficult to handle, namely, the boy who hesitates, evidently feeling he ought to come, evidently having something on his conscience, yet afraid to come. As you know he is just the boy who ought to come, there is a great temptation to use a little pressure, but he is just the boy you must *not* press. He is probably swaying violently backward and forward, now almost resolved to come, now quite determined against it. If he feels he will be forced he will simply go off and you will never get near him again, at any rate till after the Confirmation. If, however, he really trusts your promise to let him have his own way, he will not be afraid to come to see you and to attend class and club; and so, when his mood changes and he feels he would like to confess, why, there he is and there you are. With this sort of boy, as indeed with all, absolute truth is the only thing. I say, "My dear boy, I am quite sure you ought to come, for there is evidently something on your mind, and if you come to Confirmation with something worrying you, you will get little good. But I am not going to press you. It is your responsibility, not mine. If you say yes I shall be very thankful to God, but if you say no I shall not speak to you about confession again till you speak about it to me."

When any boy says yes, the next thing is to help

him to prepare. It is, of course, much better for one person to help a boy to prepare and some one else hear his confession, but that can't always be managed, and some one must help him prepare. My own plan is as follows: I have each boy separately, I explain that I don't want him to tell me anything *yet*, and then, taking a piece of paper and a pencil and making the boy sit by my side, I begin gently with those things a boy is least ashamed of. I begin, "Now about your prayers? I don't want you to tell me anything now, that will be for your confession. But when you come to confession you will have to tell me all about your prayers. Whether you have always said them. If you can say how many times you have missed, do. If you can't remember and know it is often, you must say so, saying, 'I have often missed my prayers.' If you have missed your morning prayers more often than your evening, say so, saying, 'I have often missed my prayers especially in the morning.' If you have said them carelessly, or without thinking, or in bed, you must say so. But don't accuse yourself of anything you have not done. Do you understand?" When the boy says "Yes, I understand," I write on the paper *Prayers, Morning and Evening*. I then pass on to such subjects as Church and Sunday observance, swearing, and bad language, betting and gambling, lying, quarrelling, and disobedience, dishonesty at home, or at work, constantly reminding the boy not to accuse himself

of more than he has done, and, as each subject is dealt with, writing a single word, such as "Worship," "Language," etc., on the paper as a reminder. Then, when the boy is feeling at ease and beginning to understand the idea of confession, I say, "And now there is one more sin I must speak of. There are some sins of impurity that a boy commits by himself or with other lads. Do you know what I mean?" In very rare cases, cases principally of little boys without brothers, in very quiet, strict houses, the boy will look puzzled, and say, "Please, sir, I don't understand." Such cases are very rare, but I believe quite genuine. But in the vast majority of cases, however, you will get the answer, "Yes, sir, I understand what you mean." Then I say, "Well, my dear boy, you quite understand that you are not to accuse yourself of what you have never done, but if you have fallen into any such sins don't be afraid to confess them. Say quite openly, 'I have committed sins of impurity by myself,' or 'I have committed sins of impurity with other lads.'" I know that many people will think it a very dangerous thing to do, but I am certain that there is very little real danger and infinite chances of good. Many boys who have fallen into sins of impurity would cast them off for good, to their own boundless happiness and profit, if they were led to confess them early enough.

When all the boys who mean to use confession have been carefully prepared, it is a good thing to

fix a time when they can all come together to church. If you can hear confessions in some place in church, as, for instance, at the altar rail, where you can't be heard but where every one in church can see, so much the better. As each boy finishes his confession, say to him, "Go back to your place and send So-and-so." There is no harm in asking a few questions, but if the boy has been properly prepared it should not be necessary. In speaking to each boy before giving the absolution, I am careful to remind him that there is no need for him ever to come again, yet, if he ever feels he needs the help of confession again, he must never be afraid to say to me or to any other priest, "I want to make my confession before next Communion."

In conclusion, I want to say a word, if I may, to those of my brethren who tell me that though they don't actually teach confession, yet their teaching practically comes to the same thing, for "I always have a private talk with each lad and question him pretty closely and try to get at anything which may be troubling him." Now, so far from this being practically the same thing as teaching about confession, it is exactly what plain teaching on confession is meant to prevent. I once heard a young clergyman at a clerical meeting speak as follows: "When I was prepared for Confirmation, I and all my schoolfellows were very suspicious about confession, so when my headmaster sent for me and began questioning me,

I made up my mind at once and just told him a lot of absolute falsehoods. And ever since then I have been much opposed to confession." The speaker might far more reasonably have let his unpleasant experience dispose him in favour of confession. If the headmaster, instead of asking a lot of impertinent questions, had done his plain duty and taught the boys about confession, leaving it free to them to come or not as they liked, then those who had anything on their minds would have come freely, and the others would not have been driven to prepare for the gift of the Holy Spirit by telling a lot of absolute falsehoods, a preparation for so great a gift which can hardly have helped to secure a blessing. And really the fact that a boy has been committed to one's charge to be prepared for Confirmation does not justify one in asking a lot of impertinent questions on matters on which the boy has neither sought or desired one's assistance. For what is a boy to do when so questioned? Either he must tell you things he has a perfect right to keep to himself, or he must tell you point blank he won't answer (which not one boy in a thousand is likely to do), or he must maintain a sulky and defiant silence, hardly an ideal attitude towards one's friend and pastor, or he must tell lies, not, as I have said, a favourable preparation for Confirmation. How very general the last two results are, I leave my brethren to say.

CHAPTER IX

THE CONFIRMATION AND FIRST COMMUNION

Interval before first Communion—Confirmation day—The eve—The morning celebrations—The service—Absentees—Preparation for first Communion—First Communion—Doctrine.

IT is not a bad thing, where it is possible, to allow some little time, say three weeks or a month, to elapse between Confirmation and first Communion, thus making it possible to leave all, or at any rate the bulk, of the teaching about Communion till after the Confirmation. The teaching about Communion needs to be very slow, very thorough, and with a good deal of what in teaching natural science is called "practical work." Now what with Confessions and the mechanical part of the preparation for Confirmation, the giving out of tickets, arranging places, and filling up of lists, there is always a danger of this vitally important preparation being hurried and scamped if the first Communion is to be soon after Confirmation. If, however, it is put off for some weeks, the necessary preparation can be done thoroughly. And such delay of the first Communion

is worth while even when the Confirmation comes just before Easter. Indeed, I am much opposed to letting the newly confirmed make their first Communion on a great feast day such as Easter or Whitsunday. The number of the communicants and the consequent length of the service is very trying to young and inexperienced communicants, and may daunt and discourage them. When they are more at home they will appreciate the glory of a great corporate communion, but let them begin quietly. We will therefore suppose that the first Communion is not to take place till three weeks or a month after Confirmation, and will treat of Confirmation and of preparation for the first Communion in that order.

Everything should be done to make the Confirmation day as impressive as possible. Boys are naturally both reverent and religious where they can be got to think. Much that passes for carelessness and irreverence is really only awkardness, ignorance, and high spirits. Do everything then to make the boy think. Unspoilt boy nature and the grace of God will do the rest. The service of Confirmation should be carefully explained word by word, and you should take care that the boy has a book for use on the night. I am no great believer in the multiplication of little manuals. Let the boy learn to use his Prayer Book. To this end, and to fill up the periods of waiting, it is a good thing to supply the lad with a list of gospels, epistles, and collects, together with suitable hymns,

which he can use during the service. Let him clearly understand that, during all times of silence and waiting he may kneel, as long as he feels able, and sit when he gets tired, and that he may either pray or read in his Prayer Book, or just sit quiet and think. Get him always to feel at home in his Father's house.

The Sunday night before the Confirmation it is a good thing to number the seats in church which the candidates will occupy on the Confirmation night, letting each candidate know his or her number. Then after Evensong ask the Congregation to stop, those, however, who find themselves in numbered seats, removing into the side aisles or galleries. Then, when the candidates are in their proper seats, have a service of intercession, the Veni Creator sung kneeling, a few suitable collects and hymns, an address on the gifts of the spirit, and a time for silent prayer. Such a service will help candidates and friends alike, and will give you a chance of impressing on the latter the fact that the service should not be an opportunity for giggling and whispering about the candidates' clothes and appearance, but a time of earnest prayer for them.

On the Confirmation day have celebrations at such hours as will afford all candidates and their friends a chance to come and plead the atoning sacrifice. It is quite beautiful to see boys on their way to work, come, in their working clothes and leaving their dinner pails and baskets at the bottom of the church,

to a 5 a.m. celebration to pray for themselves or their mates. And a later celebration, say 9.30, after the children are off to school, will give the mothers, whether as candidates themselves, or as mothers and friends of candidates, a chance. If, however, you have only one celebration, and that at an hour when half your candidates are at work and the other half are busy getting children their breakfast, and packing them off to school, you will naturally complain that your people don't respond to sacramental teaching.

At the service try and have everything working smoothly. Nothing has a worse effect on all the candidates, especially the boys, than anything which can be described as fuss. And the secret of avoiding fuss is to have everything well thought out beforehand, and the candidates well instructed as to when to sit, what to do, and how to come up. We may presume that the service will be in the evening; if, however, it is in the afternoon, the candidates, at any rate the young ones, should be kept together for the rest of the day. The women will probably have to go home, the men may be left to take a walk, but the boys and girls should be taken, the boys by yourself and the girls by some good lady, into the school or parish room, and kept quiet with books, pictures, and music; tea should be provided, and then they should be brought back to evening service. This service, especially if it is on a week night, may well be made the occasion for a general gathering together of the

candidates of past years, at which, from time to time, say every five years, a renewal of the Confirmation vows may be made. So the candidates of past years will, as it were, welcome the new confirmees, and an impressive day have a helpful impressive ending.

It will often happen that a boy, or even several, will fail to turn up on the evening. Go at once, the next day, and find out, and let there be no appearance of blaming the boy. It may have been, from his point of view, quite unavoidable, and, however little he may show it, he may be fully as disappointed as you are. Of course, if he has kept away because at the last minute his resolution has failed him—there is no more to be said. Pressure would be fatal, and all your tact will be required to keep the lad to Bible class and church in hopes that in a few years he may come forward again. As in the case of training athletes there is no case so difficult as that of a man who suddenly goes stale, so, with boys, there is no case so difficult as that of a lad who breaks down suddenly at the last. Such cases are, however, rare; and it is much more common to find that the boy was kept late at work. Such accidents may often be prevented by finding out beforehand where they are likely to occur, and then writing a courteous letter to the employer. Such letters almost always meet with the kindest response. But when, at the last minute, a boy fails, deal gently with him, make light of it, and show him how you can take him to some

neighbouring church on a Sunday afternoon and have him confirmed in plenty of time to make his first Communion with the others. Rightly used, such an accident may be an opportunity of blessing to you and the lad. And, however troublesome it may be, do not be tempted to let the boy's Confirmation wait for a year. If he is ready now he will suffer from waiting. On the other hand, if you have any suspicions that a boy is not ready, don't let the fact that he and his parents are willing induce you to present him. If there seems any levity or lack of earnestness, deal straight with him. Tell him what a glorious opportunity Confirmation is and what a pity it is to waste it, and tell him to wait another year. He is sure to be hurt and surprised, but if you are gentle and kind with him it may be the right sort of hurt, and may result in a very humble, careful candidate next year. And anything is better than a bad Confirmation.

A clear week after the Confirmation may be allowed, and then the classes of preparation for first Communion should start. And definiteness, plainness, and thoroughness are needed now as much and more than at any point of the boys' instruction. Many boys, after Confirmation, never come to Communion at all. This is put down to carelessness and irreligion. The true reason is that they don't know how to behave or what to do at Communion, and are afraid, like all boys, of doing something silly in public and

making exhibitions of themselves. And this is quite a natural and right feeling, and should be respected. Everything possible should be done not merely to explain but also to show what the Communion service is. It is, I am convinced, the greatest possible blessing for a boy to have acted as altar server for some years before his Confirmation. I know many excellent clergy say serving is bad for young children. Every one, of course, is entitled to his own opinion, and for my own part I can't find words in which to express my dissent from such a view. After many years' acquaintance with boy servers, I believe that the younger they serve, provided they are properly taught and trained and encouraged in reverence, the better and happier for them. But not all boys can have this chance of serving, and those who have not served will require the more careful preparation, and this, too, even in those churches where the Holy Eucharist is made the chief service on Sunday, and the children are encouraged to be present, for a plain celebration necessarily differs from a choral, and there are, too, the details of the actual reception. It is an excellent thing to get the candidates to come for a few Sundays and be present at the early celebration, that they may learn to find their way about their Prayer Books and grow accustomed to seeing people go up and receive. Even those who most object to non-communicating attendance will hardly object to this. If possible, let it be at a celebration,

when you yourself can kneel with them, but if not, get their Sunday School teachers or relations to bring them. As a few at a time is best, those who are still at school or go to work late may come on week-days instead. Then, when the order and manner of the service is well known and understood, have a class in church and show each candidate how to come up, how to kneel, place the hands, and receive the chalice. I think there is no irreverence in making each boy take the empty chalice into his hands and return it to the priest, that he may learn by experience how to do so. Speak to him also, of remaining kneeling at least until the priest has given the chalice to the person next him, and passed on to the one beyond who is in the act of reception. Such details seem trivial, but they all tend to set the boy at his ease when he at last comes to make his first Communion, and so they tend, in the end, to true reverence and devotion.

When the day for the boy's first communion comes he should not be left to come by himself. No matter how carefully he may have been prepared and how fully everything may have been shown him, there will still be a certain strangeness and unfamiliarity. Now the boy cannot be attending to his prayers and getting the fullest possible benefit from his first Communion if he is wondering all the time if he is doing right, and constantly looking about him to see what he ought to do next and whether the time has come

to go up. On the other hand, if he has some one kneeling next him to help him he will feel quite at his ease, and his mind will be free for the real business in hand. To this end make it your business to see that the boy has some one to come with him. Even when the boy has a communicant mother, or elder brother, you must not neglect to see to the arrangements personally. Where there are suitable relations they are plainly the right people *if the boy wishes for their help*, but even so they may not think about it unless you speak about it, and the boy will be too shy and reserved in religious matters to ask them himself. And in many cases a boy prefers one of his own mates. Explain the matter to the whole class and ask each boy to say whom he would like, be it mother, sister, elder brother, Sunday School teacher, or club mate, and then speak to the person chosen yourself. I am always glad when a relation is chosen, because it tends to break down the reserve about religion so common between relations. But when a club mate is chosen it is a good thing too, good for the helper and good for the helped. Many a lad has had cause to echo the Psalmist's words, "I was glad when they said unto me, We will go into the house of the Lord."

Hitherto I have spoken only of what may be called the outward preparations for first Communion; of the doctrinal preparation I have said nothing, principally because to deal fully with this subject would require

half a volume. It is, however, a most important part of the lad's preparation, and there are one or two points I must touch on. Bring out fully the threefold aspect of the Holy Eucharist as (1) Communion, in which we get strength-giving food for our souls ; (2) the memorial sacrifice, which affords the greatest opportunity of prayer for ourselves and others ; and (3) the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, making the Holy Eucharist the great opportunity of worship. Boys like to see what a thing means, and, I fear, it often comes to them as a pleasant surprise when they discover that religion does mean something. Yet, if the language is simple, boys are quite as well able to grasp and receive religious truth as college professors. It is language not thought which is the difficulty. Thus every boy can understand and appreciate the need of food for the soul. If he is trying at all to serve God he knows by experience the truth of St. Paul's words "to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not" (Rom. vii.); and he can quite understand that he needs more spiritual life and strength if he is to perform that which is good. It is only the long words and far-fetched similes in which we too often wrap up simple Catholic teaching that the boy can't understand.

So too with the idea of the memorial sacrifice. We have no claim on God's mercy except that which is given us by the fact that Christ died for us. Now, if you wish to ask a favour of any one, would you not

remind him of any claim you might have in his goodness? Even so, when we wish to pray to God, the best time is at the Holy Communion, for there *we remind God that Christ died for us*, "for as often as we eat this bread and drink this cup we do show forth the Lord's death till he come" (1 Cor. xi. 26). And whose work is it thus to offer again and again the perpetual memorial of His passion? Not the work of the priest alone but of the whole congregation, of which the priest is only the representative. To bring out this idea I always take some such illustration as this: If I am arrested for striking a man, it is no good pleading that I did not hit him; that it was my hand that struck the blow. True, my hand struck the blow, but the act was the act of the whole body. So, too, if I tell a lie, it is only my tongue that speaks, but the words are the words of the whole man. So, too, at the Holy Eucharist, it is the priest who breaks the bread and blesses the cup and offers the memorial, but he is only the hand and the tongue of the congregation who are the body of Christ, and the youngest boy in the congregation as truly joins in offering the sacrifice as the priest himself. And that is why, if I go into church to celebrate and find no one there, I cannot celebrate, for the work is not the work of a single man, even though he be a priest, but of the body of faithful people.

The same idea, namely, that the offering of the Holy Eucharist is the work of the whole congregation

and of every member of it, must be insisted on when one speaks of it as the great act of worship. What is worship? Honour, for we call the Mayor the worshipful, meaning the man worthy of honour. And how do you honour a man, a great general, let us say? Why, by letting all men hear of his wonderful victories, putting up a memorial to them, and in every way spreading the knowledge of them. And so in the Holy Eucharist we show forth to God the Father in heaven, and to ourselves, and to the rest of the Church, and to those who are careless and don't believe, how great things our Lord Jesus has done for us.

There are, of course, plenty of other ways of looking at the Blessed Sacrament which boys are well able to understand, such as our giving ourselves afresh to God—offering and presenting ourselves, our souls and bodies—at the time He gives Himself to us, or the thought of children at their Father's table, or the bond of union which binds us to one another because we all eat of that Bread and drink of that Cup. But at first, at any rate, the ideas should be few, simple, and often repeated, for, as I have said, with simple and uneducated persons it is familiarity and use, not novelty or originality, which have power. Vary your words, your illustrations, your anecdotes, let your teaching be again and again the same.

Finally, encourage your boys in class to talk and ask questions. No doubt what they say will some-

times sound irreverent, but where no irreverence is meant there is none in fact; and though their words may grate upon your ear, there may be, generally is, I find, a genuine and earnest desire on the boy's part to understand. It is not that they are not willing to believe, but that they want to know what they can understand, and what they must be prepared to accept till they can prove it for themselves by experience. And they have a right to know, and it is fatal to rebuke a boy who is honestly anxious to learn, merely because his ignorance makes his question sound irreverent. Far better let him bring his doubts and difficulties to you, rather than to some one who will not have the power and may not have the will to lead him aright.

CHAPTER X

THE COMMUNICANT BOY

Constant attention needed—The monthly class—Communion cards—Manuals—Notice of the class—Thanksgiving.

AFTER the Confirmation and first Communion, one's work with a lad, so far from being done, is only just begun. The very zeal itself with which we clergy deal with our Confirmation candidates makes subsequent neglect the more fatal. A very good layman and devoted church worker once said to me, "You clergy will do anything to get a boy confirmed, and then you don't seem to think he wants any more attention. The Wesleyans look after their young people ever so much better." This, if somewhat strongly worded, is, I fear, not without an element of truth. On the other hand, many clergy are genuinely afraid of pressing boys unduly in the matter of Communion. One clergyman, for whom and for whose opinion I had a great respect, once said to me, "Your boys only come to the Sacrament because you press them to." Now, I don't for a moment admit the truth of this accusation; but if it were true, I

think it is much better that they should come because I ask them than that they should stay away altogether because no one asked them to come. Does God really mean young persons and children to be, not merely unforced, but not even persuaded and urged towards what is good? Then why, in the name of wonder, did He give them parents, guardians, and teachers? And what is a pastor for? I think there is very little danger of a boy coming to Communion who is really unfit—especially if confession is fully offered and not forced—and, when all is said and done, I think the duty of the pastor is not only to go after his sheep but to go after it *till he find it*. The very insistance tells. A man once said to a fellow curate of mine, "It seems to me you never will leave me alone." "No," replied the parson, "I never shall while we are both above ground." And the man's wife told me years after that those words were the turning-point with her husband. When the parson left he had said to her, "If I am worth that much to Mr.—— I must be worth something, and I'll have another try." And he did.

So I will describe what I think the best way of dealing with boys. Communion should be at least once a month, but not, I think, at first, oftener. Keep before the boys the ideal of more frequent Communion, but at first let their rule be morning and evening prayer every day, public worship every week, Communion every month. Where the Holy Eucharist

occupies its proper place as the chief service on Sundays, the weekly act of public worship should certainly be at the Choral Eucharist and not in the evening; but where Matins has usurped the place on the Lord's Day which rightfully belongs to the Lord's own Service, and the change cannot be made —and I quite recognise that it often cannot be made without some years of preparation and teaching— then I cannot see that it matters to which service the boys come. I have never been able to recognise the peculiar sanctity of the hour of 11 a.m., nor do I think Cathedral Matins any less unsuitable for boys and uneducated people generally than Cathedral Evensong.

Before the monthly Communion a class in preparation for Communion should be held, say on Thursday night. This may be the monthly meeting of the guild, but all boys should be encouraged to attend. I am not very sure that I believe much in guilds for boys; however simple the rules are, many boys will shrink from binding themselves, even though they may perform all the requirements of the rules without binding themselves. On the other hand, if only a few join, it may make them feel themselves set apart from the others as better than they—which may do them harm—and may make the rest feel themselves set apart as worse than the guild members, which is sure to do them harm. Still, guilds certainly have their advantages which cannot be denied.

But, guild or no guild, the monthly class should be held.

The object of this class is not, of course, to take the place of private preparation; rather it should be to help towards it. I don't think any very elaborate office is needed. The best form, as far as my experience goes, is a hymn, an address, and them some suitable collects and prayers. It is, I quite recognise, a mere fad of mine, but I always have 317, *A. and M.*, as the hymn, because I think, if the old familiar tune Rockingham becomes associated in the boys' minds with the idea of their monthly Communion, then perhaps some one of them, having lapsed from Communion for years, may hear the tune sung at some street corner gospel meeting or mission service, and may be recalled to the memory of his boyish strivings after God, and may be led to repentance. The address should be plain and should deal with one, or, at the most, two ideas. Self examination, good resolutions, worship, the strengthening and refreshing of our souls, prayer for others. These and similar ideas should be taken simply, care being taken to let what is said suggest ideas for the private preparation. Of course, each Communion and the preparation for it should contain each of the four leading ideas of confession, prayer, thanksgiving, and resolution, but at each Communion one of these four ideas may be specially emphasised. The order of the class may be roughly as follows:—

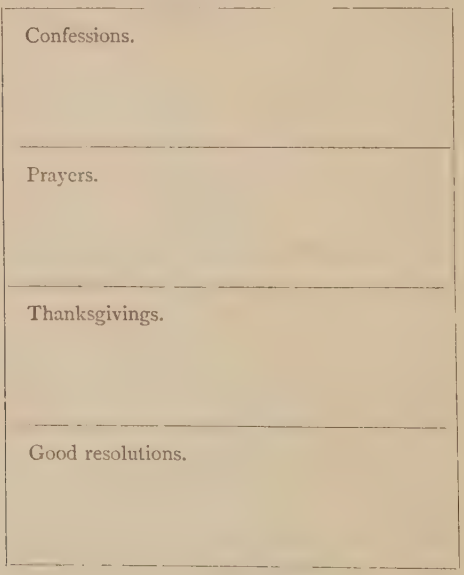
Hymn (say 317, *A. and M.*).
Address.
Let us pray.
Lord have mercy, etc.
Lord's Prayer.
Collect for Ash Wednesday.
Collect: "O God whose nature and property it is,"
or Collect for XXI Sunday after Trinity.
Collect for Purity from Communion Service.
Extemporary prayer based on the leading thought of the address.
One or two suitable collects varying with the subject of the address.
The prayer of humble access.
Grace.

Some people recommend a pause for silent prayer and examination of conscience. This, I think, is better left for the boy to use at home in his private preparation. After every class keep your eyes open for any boy who seems to want to speak to you; he may want to say he wishes to make his confession. Be ready to meet him half-way if he wants to, but let the motion come from him. Don't seem to be expecting it. Before Easter, however, and probably before the other great Feasts, give a definite invitation to all who wish to come, naming a time when you will be in your room to help any who want your help in their preparation, and a time when

you will be in church to hear any who wish to come.

And now I want to speak of a help to the right use of Communion which I have found very valuable with all classes of communicants, and especially with boys. Why is it that many boys, after being fairly regular communicants for a time, drop off, and cease to come? In many cases, no doubt, sin is at the bottom of it, they don't come because their lives are such that they don't feel they can. But in many cases there is a different reason: boys come for a while, and then, as they will themselves tell you, they don't seem to be getting any good by it, and so they stay away. And this is a perfectly true reason, they don't get any good, and so long as they don't get any good they are quite right to stay away. And the reason why they get no benefit must be sought, I need not say, in themselves, and not in the Blessed Sacrament, nor is it far to seek. If you were kneeling next a lad at Communion, and suddenly turned to him and said, "My boy, are you praying to God; what are you praying for?" What do you think would be his answer, if he spoke the truth? Would it not be, ninety times out of a hundred, "I was not praying for anything in particular"? Well, that is what he will get. He prays for nothing and he gets nothing. And so with his confessions, his thanksgivings, his resolutions, he says, "The burden of our sins is intolerable," but he could not tell you, he can't

tell God, what it is he is confessing; he says, "We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we glorify Thee, we give thanks to Thee," but there is nothing special in his heart; he draws near, but could not say in what particular way he is steadfastly purposing to lead a new life. Can you wonder that he gets little good, and that before long, realising that such is the case, he ceases to come at all. Now I have found the following device a great help. I have a number of cards printed as follows:—



They should be just big enough to slip into the lad's communion book, and, if printed on quite thin

card, are very cheap. The boys should be supplied with them at each preparation class and urged to fill them up. The use will be best explained by an example, the example of a boy who, after eighteen months of neglect of religion, nearly died in hospital and then returned to Communion; it ran as follows :—

Confessions. S. and G., N. P. and C. (swearing and gambling, neglect of prayer and Communion). Letters were used in case the card might be dropped.

Prayers. For forgiveness. For grace to do better. For George (the boy's younger brother, whom he had led into bad company and now could not get back again).

Thanksgivings. For recovery. For return to Church and Communion. For answer to a prayer offered in hospital.

Resolution. Morning and evening prayer. Monthly Communion. To come home daily to dinner (if he took his dinner to work he finished it in ten minutes, and then spent the rest of the dinner hour in playing banker in the works, or pitch and toss on the croft outside the works; if he went home to dinner he avoided temptation).

Now with a card filled up in such a way before him a boy knows what he is doing, the service means something to him, and he does not offer the sacrifice of fools. Nor does it end there. If, after the service,

the card is left in the book, it helps greatly in next month's preparation. Then the boy finds that something confessed has again been committed and must stay in the confession column; or it has not been committed, and may be transferred to the thanksgiving column. Some good resolution has not been kept and must be confessed, or it has been kept, and thanks must be returned for it. And so on, and so on. Each month's communion leads to the next. And before long the lad finds that there are so many things he wants to speak to God about, he must come often to the Altar. I remember a young man telling me he did not believe in frequent Communion, it made people, he said, think lightly of the Sacrament. Soon after he became not only a weekly but an occasional week-day communicant. I spoke to him, and he said, "Oh yes, didn't you know most of my Sunday School boys are being confirmed this year? There is so much to say about them a fellow wishes he could be at Communion oftener for their sakes." And, smiling, he showed me a card filled up in front, and on the back too, with the boys' names and with some special request for each. And surely it is more to be wished that a young man should say, "There are so many things I want to pray about; I wish I could get to Communion oftener than I do," rather than that he should say, "I know I ought to go to Communion oftener than I feel inclined to." And then the cards supply a valuable opportunity of

giving advice. When a lad becomes engaged to a girl, it is often desirable to speak to him about the dangers and temptations and responsibilities of courtship. Yet it is a difficult and dangerous thing to do, and one in which, if one is clumsy and lacking in tact, or vague and lacking in courage, one may do more harm than good. One does not want to hurt a lad's feelings, and with clumsy fingers knock the bloom off what is so wonderful and beautiful to him. And yet there is so much danger, so much need for advice. Now the card gives the opening. When you give him his card the first time after he has told you of his engagement, tell him to make it a special subject of prayer at every Communion that God would bless his courtship and marriage and make them what they ought to be; tell him to have her name always on his card, and to get her to use a card and put his name on it. And you will do no harm if you add, "There will be no fear, my dear boy, of the engagement being a bad one, will there, if you pray for her and she for you week by week at God's Altar?" And you will get the answer I have got, "I know what you mean, sir, and we don't mean there to be anything wrong. We do want God to bless us." And when your boy is safely married to a good girl the battle is more than half won, and you can thank God that there is one more home where boys and girls will grow up "in the fear and nurture of the Lord and to the praise of His Holy Name."

The next question is, What manual should be next given to the boys? Personally, I am not, as I have said, in favour of a multiplicity of little manuals, and one special attraction of cards such as I have described is that they help to the formation of habits of prayer which make the supply of extra prayers interpolated into the Communion service, as is usual in most Communion manuals, unnecessary. Indeed, I think the Prayer Book, with a carefully prepared and well filled up card of subjects for prayer, confession, thanksgiving, and resolution, is all that ought to be required. At the same time many boys will, at first at any rate, require more assistance than the Prayer Book affords, and for them there are plenty of fairly good manuals, though a perfect manual could only be obtained by writing a special one for each separate boy. The only ones of which I have had any experience are *The Pilgrimage*, Mowbray & Co., and *The Communicant and Guide*, by the Bishop of Argyll, same publishers, though no doubt there are plenty of other good ones. But both these I have used and found useful.

A point of some importance is the method of giving notice of the class. Notice of it may, of course, be given at the Sunday Bible class, and in church, and a notice should be posted in the club. I am, however, myself a great believer in letting each boy have a written or printed notice if possible by post. Nor, if the clergyman possesses a cyclostyle or other

multiplier, need there be any difficulty about this? My own plan is to send, each month, a cyclostyled notice, in a halfpenny envelope, to each boy. The notice runs something as follows :—

Sacred Trinity Clergy House.

There will be a class for boys in preparation for Holy Communion *next Thursday* at a *quarter-past nine* (*9.15*) in the Mission Room.

Please try to be present.

Please try to be punctual.

Holy Communion next Sunday at 7 a.m. and 8 a.m.

Subjects for special Intercession this Month.

(1) For those being prepared for Confirmation.
(2) For a blessing on the new Boys' club.
(3) For the work of the Lent mission services.

The advantages of the printed or cyclostyled notices are that, if the boy can come, he can hardly forget with a notice in his hand, while, if he can't, it tells him the special subjects of intercession, and reminds him either to ask you personally to give him a card or to arrange with a friend who can attend the class to fetch him one. And I would repeat that I have found nothing so valuable with boys as the provision of suitable subjects for united monthly intercession.

If the cost of postage is a consideration, the monthly notice of Communion may be left at the same time as the monthly report card, but it is much better if the notices are sent out by post early in the week, and the visit with the report card made after the preparation class, and you can then inquire specially after absentees. And the arrival by post of the notice is valuable for the boy in whose life the arrival of letters is a rare event, and also forms a warning to the mother that next Sunday is the boys' Sunday and she will have to call him. In a word, it forms for the whole house a monthly reminder. The order of events then runs as follows: On Sunday the notice of the preparation class and of the next Sunday's Communion is given out at the Bible class and in church; on Tuesday the notice arrives by post; on Thursday the boy attends his class; on Friday or Saturday the visit with the Bible class monthly report is made and an opportunity afforded for asking after any absentees; and on Sunday the boys' corporate Communion takes place. With boys, regularity, rule, and constant repetition are the things that tell. I had an interesting example of it once. As the Sunday before Whitsunday was the boys' Sunday and I wished them all to communicate on the great Feast day, I decided to postpone the usual boys' Sunday for a week. The night after the usual notices should have been received, a small knot of boys interviewed me in the club and asked me why the usual notices had not been sent. I ex-

plained my reasons, but the explanation was very ill received,—in fact, I was severely taken to task. The great festivals were special occasions, the boys said, something extra which they would, of course, observe, but nothing ought to be allowed to interfere with the regular monthly Communion. Since then I have taken the wiser course of pointing out, when the monthly Sunday comes just before a big festival, that a good Communion is the best preparation for a good Communion, and I take as one of the special subjects for intercession, that we may all keep Christmas or Easter, or whatever it may be, properly to God's glory and our benefit. For, as I have said, rule, regularity, order, these are the things boys want. The psalmist knew boy nature when he declared that a young man, if he would cleanse his way, must *rule himself after God's word.*

Of thanksgiving after Communion a word must be spoken. I have often felt inclined to try a short devotional meeting after Evensong on the evening of the boys' Communion Sunday, as a thanksgiving for Communion. I have, however, never actually done so, partly from practical difficulties as to time and place, and partly because, though there is a real danger of the preparation class being regarded by the boy as a substitute for, instead of a help to his own private preparation, there is an even greater danger of making the same mistake with regard to a thanksgiving class or service. And so, as the need for such a

public thanksgiving seems less and the dangers greater, than in the case of preparation, I have always contented myself with frequently impressing on the boys the duty of thanksgiving after Communion, and with pointing out to them how and when such thanksgivings should be made.

CHAPTER XI

SPECIAL CASES

The boy with the bad home—With temptations at work—With parents opposed to Church—With some special temptation—Without moral stamina—Difficult to influence—The soldier and sailor.

I HAVE now described the whole course of the boy's treatment from the time he first joins the club, quite ignorant of, and, it may be, indifferent to, anything like definite churchmanship, to the time when, it may be hoped, he has grown into a steady and consistent communicant. I want now to treat of some special types of boys and their treatment. And in this connection I would again emphasise the absolute necessity of visiting the homes of all your boys. It is quite impossible to judge rightly of a boy's character unless you know, as thoroughly as possible, the conditions of his home. And it is clearly useless to know the right medicine for different diseases if your ignorance of the patient himself prevents your diagnosing his complaint accurately.

To begin with, boys with bad homes and bad

parents need special treatment. Of course, cruel and brutal parents are very much rarer than most people imagine. To judge from the way in which many people talk and write, one would think that the great mass of poor people habitually beat and ill-treat their children, whereas cruelty to children is not a bit more common among poor people than among the rich, though, when it does occur, the absence of that control which, in the upper classes is exercised by public opinion and the presence of servants, may make it assume worse forms. Still, at the same time, cruelty to children is not unknown, and when it occurs is a fruitful source of trouble. I remember in my first curacy a boy who nearly drove me mad, he was so utterly unmanageable. One day, driven beyond patience by some perfectly impish naughtiness, I took him by the collar to put him out of the room. Directly I gripped him by the collar he turned white and winced, as if expecting a beating. This in itself was sufficient proof that the boy was habitually ill-treated. I saw the mother, an excellent woman, and she admitted that the father constantly knocked the boy about. "He seldom comes to church or choir practice without having had a thrashing from his father, and all for just nothing, most times." Now, with such a boy, strictness and severity are quite useless; absolute indulgence, gentleness, and kindness were the only thing. Some boys need a very firm hand, and some need to be led by love, and you can't possibly tell

which is which without an intimate acquaintance with the boy.

What, too, is to be done with the boy whose home, quiet and respectable enough perhaps all the week, becomes a drunken pandemonium every Saturday night? Do you expect him to come to communion at 8 on Sunday morning, when, up to 4 a.m., the whole house has been full of drunken fights and oaths, and when he will go back and find no breakfast because father and mother and elder brothers and sisters will be in bed till the public-house opens and they can get something to pull themselves together? Or is a boy from such a home to go without the help of the Blessed Sacrament? I knew of one good woman, who, with plenty of children of her own to look to, had one such boy month after month to sleep with one of her own lads, go with him to the monthly Communion, and return afterwards to her house to breakfast. And she will not lose her reward. But often nobody knows of the lad's difficulty, because it is nobody's business to know and nobody cares. But it is your business to know.

Or, again, there are boys who have to help at night as programme sellers, or hawkers of oranges and sweetstuffs at some low music hall, or to help to serve in a public-house, and feel that they cannot come from such a place to the Sacrament. For there is, thank God, a strong puritan strain in many boys. And you may be blaming the boy for what is really a good trait in his

character, and, if you try to force him, may do violence to his conscience, and will certainly fill him with the hopeless feeling, so common among young people in dealing with their elders, that "he can't understand and it's no good talking." Such boys are often helped by the story of some early Christian, a courtier or soldier or what not, serving Christ amidst all the corruptions and temptations of the world, and they may be led to see that their difficulties should not make them neglect the means of Grace, but make them use them the more carefully.

Another and a most difficult problem is met when you have a boy whose parents are strongly against the teaching given at your church. If this opposition declares itself at the time of the boy's first visit to the club, it is, of course, much better to decline him as a member at once. I always say to the boy in such cases, "I am very sorry; it's not that I have anything against you, but this is a Church club for Church lads, and I can't have you. Your parents would expect you to go to Chapel, and I should want you to go to Church, and that would not do." But, unfortunately, the parents often declare that they don't care where the boy goes as long as he goes somewhere good, and then, when the time comes for Confirmation, there is trouble. Now I think I need hardly say that nothing should be done without, much less against, the parents' authority. It is much better to tell the boy to wait, and try by his obvious earnestness to

win his parents' consent; and when, as is often the case, the parents are themselves truly religious people according to their lights, this plan often works well. How long a boy should be kept waiting for Confirmation when he himself earnestly desires it is, of course, a question the answer to which will vary with circumstances. I once had a lad in London whose parents opposed him, I fear, out of a genuine objection to religion of any kind. The boy waited till he was eighteen and then quietly took the matter into his own hands. He told his mother that he earned good wages and brought them home regularly and hoped to go on doing so, but that if he could not serve God in his own home he would have to find some home where he could do so, and that for the future he must either be left free to go to church when, how, and where he chose, or he should leave home and lodge elsewhere. He got his own way, and he was so quiet and steady I don't think it did him any harm, but it is not an ideal thing for a lad to oppose his parents, and a young boy must never be allowed to. The whole situation needs tact.

Then there is the boy who, quiet and steady for a time, has violent gusts of temptation. Gambling is the commonest sin which shows itself in this way, but unaccountable fits of temper and disobedience at work and at home, or a desire to go off with bad companions to dancing saloons and low music halls, or bouts of drunkenness—even in lads in their teens

—are all of them sins which are subject to spells of violence and then times of quiet. Any one who has had practical experience with lads will have no difficulty in believing in demoniacal possession. With such lads I find the following the best plan: When they are penitent after an outbreak—and they are often truly penitent and truly conscious of being tied and bound with the chain of their sins—put them on probation, and then, after they have really proved their desire to do right, admit them as servers. Make it a point of honour with them, if they have a relapse, to tell you even if they don't come formally to confession. But there need be no relapse. The sense of doing something in God's service is a great help to a lad, and, more than that, there is the constant strength from pleading the Sacrifice. I remember a young man who twice broke his pledge, and then ran straight a long time. One Easter he communicated, and on the Easter Monday was present without communicating. As he was not generally present on week-days, I spoke to him and said I was glad to see him. He gave me rather a watery smile, and said, "A wet Bank Holiday, sir! It wasn't safe to stay away." He knew, poor fellow, what the temptations of a long, dull, wet holiday were, and he knew too where to find strength.

Boys and men with violent besetting sins which assail them at intervals are often, apart from these temptations, the finest and strongest characters. I

need not say that you must never give up hope and you must show you don't give up hope. Many a lad is driven to the sin of Judas, moral suicide, simply by despair, and when his faith and hope fail your faith and hope must do double duty. But this type of lad is easily confounded with the merely weak and backboneless lad. There are boys who can be led anywhere; they accept and practise anything you offer them, and, at the same time, any evil they have suggested to them at school or work. They are like half-empty sacks and seem incapable of standing for a moment when your hand is withdrawn. Now, of course, there is a great difference between the strong character with one weak spot and the utterly weak and backboneless character, and the treatment must be different. To admit a typically weak boy as a server would be fatal. Luckily there is one quite infallible test, the weak boy is what one of Kipling's characters calls an unthrifty liar, that is, he will lie when he knows, with absolute certainty, that he must be found out. Many—though certainly not all—boys will lie if they think they won't be found out. The type of boy I have in my mind, and he is unfortunately far from uncommon, will lie when he knows he must be found out half an hour after. He simply lacks moral courage to face a moment's unpleasantness if it can be put off another quarter of an hour, even though it will then be much worse. I have known such a boy declare most earnestly on

Friday night that he had been working all the week, though he knew that when he came home to dinner on Saturday he would have no wages to give his mother, and would have to own he had not worked all the week. And the curious thing is, that such boys are often curiously charming and attractive, with gentle manner, unselfish, kind to younger children, and, as the mother will tell you, "better in the house than a daughter." I confess I don't know any way of putting in a backbone. It is morally as well as surgically beyond the power of man. Confession loses its power because the boy comes absolutely willingly, and, as far as what is past is concerned, does not seem to mind confessing in the least. I fear he enjoys it, and I always make confession hard rather than easy in such cases, discouraging rather than encouraging its frequent use. I really don't know how to treat such cases. The late Father Dolling used to say that they would never do any good or make any progress till they grasped the reality of Christ's presence in the Sacrament. Without doubt that is true, but a man less skilled in dealing with souls than he was may make the mistake of letting them come lightly to the Sacrament and then "having received . . . Satan enters in." I think the best thing is to try as far as possible to have such a case always with you, see him daily, have him in your rooms, use personal influence unsparingly, bear his burdens. The Salvation Army lass often succeeds

with a fallen sister where all others fail, because she takes the sinner home with her. It is the personal touch that saves. But even so the failures will far outnumber the successes. But don't be in a hurry to decide that a boy thus lacks moral character. A boy is not necessarily bad because he has told you a lie or even many lies. It is habitual and—if I may use the word—useless lying which seems to me the special symptom. And even this *may* be due to another cause, namely, habitual ill-treatment. Almost any one may be made a liar by sufficient ill-treatment.

Another type, the exact opposite of the last, needs a word or two. The types I have been considering are extraordinarily easy to influence, the difficulty being that the influence passes at once so that working with them eems like ploughing sand. Another type is the boy on whom it seems impossible to make any impression: kindness and severity seem equally useless, the boy is neither to be led nor driven. Now I think we may distinguish three forms of this type. There is the boy who, quite amenable to discipline up to the age of, say, fourteen, becomes curiously hard, unresponsive, and troublesome from that age, or a little older, to seventeen or eighteen. It is due to purely physical causes. The boy is growing and developing rapidly, and he has no vital force to spare for mental and spiritual exercises. The curious thing is that the change, at each end of the period, comes often with startling suddenness. One

day the boy is the model boy of the guild or Sunday School. The next, neither you nor his parents, at home or at church, can do anything with him. Then, two or three years after, a sudden change occurs, and the boy changes in a week from a rough, noisy lout into a quiet, pleasant youth.[1] The changes are not always so sudden or so marked, but something of this change goes on with all boys. All have their lout stage. And during this stage the great thing is not to fuss the lad, and, if possible, to prevent his parents from fussing him. You will want a very light, even if a firm hand, with boys at this stage. But to one who really loves boys and remembers his own boyhood there is something strangely pathetic and attractive in this stage of development for all the boy's silly, clumsy, noisy, and often brutal awkwardness. Such wonderful things are happening and a man is in the making.

We may distinguish between the boy whose hardness is a merely temporary matter, due to physical causes, and the boy whose hardness is a permanent element of his character. How to distinguish is a difficult point, especially if you make the boy's acquaintance after he is fifteen. But the two forms

[1] I have just had such a case. For two years the pet of half the Church workers. Then for two or three years no one had a good word for him. Now for more than a year he has been steadily helpful and sensible. He will be teaching in Sunday School in a year, I expect.

are distinct. Now a boy is not bad because he is hard. Some boys are born out of due time. They ought to have been born in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, when they would have grown up to be Drakes and Hawkins. But modern manners are too soft for them; they can't stand the restraint of civilisation and the dulness of offices and shops. When you are sure a boy is of this type, get his parents to let him join the Navy or go as a boy on a Grimsby fishing-smack. I had a splendid example of this type some time ago, when a lad of first-rate character and ability, the son of respectable middle-class parents, threw up an excellent post as a pupil-teacher to join the Navy. I asked him how he liked swabbing the decks bare-footed on a bitter morning at daybreak. He replied simply, "Its glorious. I never was really alive till I got to the training ship."

Lastly, there is the boy whose hardness is a sign of real badness. I am not writing a metaphysical treatise, and I don't know *why* some boys are radically bad. But I know some are. They are the type Mulvaney calls "mane men that wud neither laugh nor talk nor yet get drunk as a man shud." Let such a boy join the Navy too if you can get him to do so and he is eligible. If anything can make a man of him, the Navy will.

This suggests one last matter to be touched on, namely, the boys you send into the Army and Navy.

Even now there lingers among the working classes some of the old prejudice against those who join the services, and comparatively sensible women will say, when a son has enlisted, "I never looked to have such a disgrace come on the family." Let the boys know you don't feel that. Have the boy to dinner with you before he goes off, speak to him about his prayers, his communions, and the character of a true soldier. Give him a pocket Bible (the S.P.C.K. publishes a good and cheap one, specially for soldiers, made to fit in the pocket of the tunic). I had the following in a letter from a lad the other day, which illustrates the value of such a present:—

"In our regiment we show up Bible and Prayer Book on parade. I would not show up the regulation ones served out, but showed up the Prayer Book I got at Bible class and the Bible you gave me. The officer noticed them, and next day the colonel sent for me and said he was glad I had been well brought up, and hoped I would stick to my religion, which made me very proud." To all which I say, God bless the colonel. *O si sic omnes.* Find out the depôt the lad goes to for training and write to the chaplain. The first few months in the Army are a vital time. Then, when he joins his regiment write to the chaplain there. These things are well worth while. The ranks are places of great temptation, and therefore a real school for

saints, and many a soldier lad realises in his own person the character of the happy warrior—

> "Who, doomed to go in company with pain,
> And fear and bloodshed, miserable twain,
> Turns his necessity to glorious gain,
> More skilful in self-knowledge, even more pure
> As tempted more; more able to endure
> As more exposed to suffering and distress;
> Thence also more alive to tenderness."

When they come home on furlough the clergy house should be a place to which they naturally turn. They will delight to take their old place at Bible class and church and at the altar, in all the glory of red, or blue, or khaki. It is an excellent plan to keep a list of lads in the Army and Navy and write to each one every three months and encourage them to write back. I can't honestly say the lads' letters will, as a rule, be very interesting. During the late war all mine might have been copied from a common model. They are as follow:—

"DEAR SIR,—I now take my pen in hand to write you these few lines, hoping they find you, as they leave me, well at present, thank God. The food is very good (or, the food is very bad, or, we marched twenty miles yesterday, or some other bald statement of fact).

"No more at present from your affectionate friend, etc."

But the letter is a reminder, a link, between

the barrack or ship and all that stands to him as religion. It is worth getting.

And not only with the soldier and sailor lads. It is worth keeping up correspondence with all your lads. For there is no greater joy than to hear that one's children walk in truth.

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